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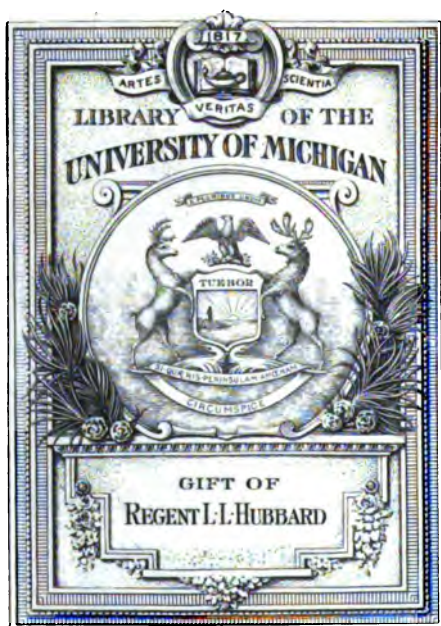
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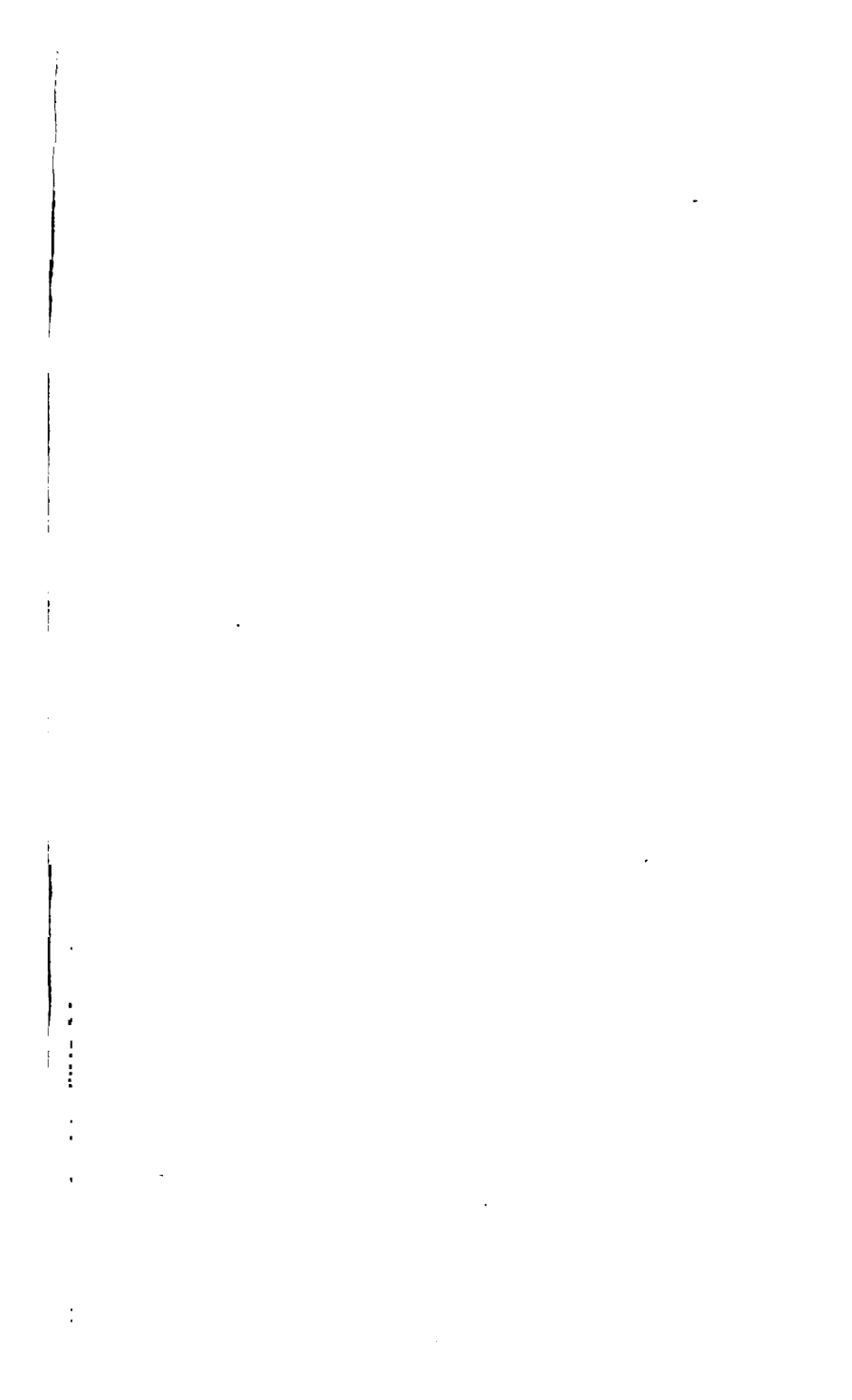
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Rnysdale, Philip.

A PILGRIMAGE OVER THE PRAIRIES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FORTUNES OF A COLONIST."

VOL. I.

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PILGRIMAGE OVER THE PRAIRIES.

CHAPTER I.

MAY, 1825.—The reader who may bear in mind my former record of Adventures (as colonist), will observe that nearly thirteen years have passed from the time of their conclusion to that inscribed above, which marks the commencement of a new series connected with and consequent upon them.

The interval had for the most part been passed by me in the quiet avocations of country life, and the enjoyment of much

happiness in the married state until a few months before, when the cup had been dashed from my lips by the death of my amiable partner.

Whilst thus cancelling the great blessing of a happy union, Providence had still left me a source of solace in a daughter (now near eight years old), our only surviving child, who with the likeness promised also the virtues of her parent—thus lightening, while she recalled her loss.

Notwithstanding, however, this spring of comfort in the desert, I found the tedium of my position pall more and more upon me, and was meditating various schemes of recreation and relief, when a circumstance occurred which gave them at once a definite form and direction.

I had descended one fine May morning into the breakfast parlour, and, with my back to the fire, been watching my little Susan assisting the important process of growth by repeated appeals to the porridge bowl, ogling

her dad between whiles with the right hearty good will that belongs to her unschooled age, when, having been favoured with the first intelligence of the day, such as "Pa! Peggy Clinker's come to make my frock," and "Pa, the newspaper's there," I availed myself of the latter item of information, and proceeded to peruse its contents.

'The very first paragraph that met my eye was the following, under the head of "Marriage in high life. — On the 8th inst., at Hanover Square, by the Rev. Theophilus Farleton, cousin of the bridegroom, the Hon. Cyrus Farleton, nephew and heir of the Earl of Leighton, to Barbara Theodora, only daughter of Sir Michael Branfold, Bart. A course of festivities and rejoicings is expected to come off the ensuing week at Leighton Park, the seat of the noble Earl, in honour of the occasion."

Cyrus Farleton! Leighton Park! The names struck me like an old tune of boyhood, or fragments of a half-remembered dream.

"Festivities and rejoicings! By Jupiter! a good idea. Why shouldn't we go and share them?" I exclaimed, clinching the sudden thought with a thump on the table.

Whilst revolving the matter further, I felt a touch at my elbow, and found my little *vis-a-vis* come on a mission of remonstrance.

"Pa!" she murmured, "you've spilt the milk on 'my pinny.'"

"Well, my dear, run to Cecily, and she will get you another."

"But, pa," she added, arching her eyes, and sinking her voice into an expostulatory tone; "you told me it was naughty to swear."

"Was I swearing, child? why, what did I say?"

"You said 'by Jupiter,' pa."

"But Jupiter was a false god, my chick, and therefore we may consider the obtestation as a nullity. I was thinking, Susan."

Cyrus Farleton! Leighton Park! What a flood of interest seemed suddenly to well about the two names.

"What were you thinking, pa?"

"I was thinking, Su, that you and I would go and treat ourselves to a holiday."

"Oh, how nice! and Jacob, and Cecily, and old Aggy, and Norman?"

"Jacob and Aggy must stay to take care of the house, but we shall want Cecily to look after our 'herb o' grace,' and Norman to provide her with a playmate."

"Oh! and when shall we go?"

"We'll set off to-morrow, so you can tell Peggy Clinker to send for her sister, and contrive to get your frock done by this evening."

Away scampered my little gossip on her gleeful errand, whilst on my own part I unlocked my writing-desk, and looked over a file of letters and other papers whose subject matter was in some sort connected with the paragraph I had just read.

One of these may require more particular mention. In the course of the past winter I had, one bitter day, been out with my gun along the coast after wild ducks, when wish-

ing to relieve the tedium of watching, with a passing whiff, I put my hand into my coat pocket in search of my tobacco pouch. It was a warm blanket coat, required by the severity of the weather, which I had not had on for years, when lo ! instead of the trusty sealskin, my fingers rustled against a paper, which, on examining, I found to be nothing less than the certificate of Lord and Lady Ardcapell's marriage, the loss of which had been so much lamented by him at one of our later interviews. It presently occurred to me, this might be one of the papers dropped upon the snow, by the individual we had formerly had the luck to rescue from the bear ; and the surmise grew into a certainty, when I remembered that this was the very coat I had worn on that occasion, and never used since till now. How it had ever come into the keeping from which it had been reft by the discourteous gripe of Bruin, had been a mystery often pondered by me since, but never to a satisfactory conclusion.

I had carefully laid the document aside till the present time, and now looked over it again, to as little purpose as before, but still with the general impression it might one day be found of importance.

It may, furthermore, be proper here to apprise the reader that, immediately on my return from America, warm with my anxious feelings on the subject, I had waited on Mr. Dalham, and given him the full history of the events which had befallen Lord Ardcapell and his family. I drew his attention to the suspicions entertained by my deceased friend of the iniquitous designs of the nephew upon his daughter's rights, and finally requested his candid opinion, first, as to the probability of her being still living, and then as to that of recovering and restoring her to her rights.

Mr. Dalham, I may observe, had been re-appointed to his office of steward by Lord Leighton, and never having been in much favour with his nephew, who could have little hope of his countenancing his nefarious

schemes, evinced no reluctance to give the case that consideration which his clear duty to his patron, no less than the claims of an unforgotten friendship, demanded of him. "From all I have heard," said he, after taking time for deliberation, "I feel rather disposed to agree with your backwoods friend in entertaining hopes that this most important life is still unsacrificed; but if we would keep it so, and more, restore it to the sphere it was destined for, not one word, not one syllable must we breathe in contradiction to the common rumour of the day. Should our doubts of the event get wind, and Cyrus' suspicions be aroused, we shall have him thwarting us at every step, and perhaps settling the question in his own favour, by acts which I shudder to contemplate."

Such was the tenor of my interview with Mr. Dalham, whose views, coinciding as they did with my own, I was fully intent on prosecuting, when that mischievous youngster, Cupid, who delights in confounding schemes

he is not a party to, came into our councils as 'thirds man,' and drove our proceedings for a season all awry.

The object of his irresistible pleading was the second daughter of my worthy friend and privy councillor aforesaid, Susan by name, whose grace and condescension being equal to her other merits, my suit ere long ended in that intimate union which is apt to untune us to all but our own happiness.

Thus were our weighty schemes laid by for nearly thirteen years, till the thunder-cloud broke above me, and it was whilst yet travail-ling beneath its gloom, that the recollection of my half-forgotten vows was revived by the perusal of the newspaper.

The rest of the day was spent in making preparations for our journey, which, being the first for many years that had drawn me from my contentful home, I regarded with something of the interest that sparkled in the eyes of my little girl, and lent wings to all her evolutions.

Stowing ourselves, early on the morrow, in mine host's (of the Red Lion) landau, (which, the weather being fine, we preferred to a closed chaise) and depositing old Norman in an easy posture at our feet, we cheerily set forth on our pleasuring tour.

After crossing the bay of Morecambe, and admiring as we passed it the picturesque pile of Lancaster Castle, we consumed the greater part of the day in traversing the monotonous levels of lower Lancashire.

Travelling at moderate speed, it was late when we reached Liverpool, where, in one of its palatial hotels, we found all contentment for the night. Crossing the Mersey next morning, we shaped our course southwards, posting it in easy stages, relieved by ample intervals of rest, and terminated our day's travel by an early hour in the afternoon, at an Inn which had caught my fancy, on the roadside.

It was one of those quaint old structures that are now becoming notable from their

very rarity, surrounded by a level champaign country, agreeably diversified by plantations, amongst which I had caught some glimpses of a noble looking Elizabethan mansion, whose chimneys were still visible from the front of the hostelry. The landlord, in answer to my inquiries, directed my attention to the sign over his door, where the wolf's head and pendant arrow sufficed to inform me, even without the aid of the underwritten title, that it was the seat of the Dallington family.

It had happened that circumstances in early life had rendered these arms familiar to me, and they were those, I now remembered, I had observed on the gun of the unhappy exile who had saved my life in America.

The present proprietor, the landlord informed me, was Mr. Clement Dallington, who owned an immense extent of the neighbouring country "I pay him a hundred a year for yon cranky Inn o' mine, which ne'er a customer comes near now-a-days but just the

neebour folk, for fear, I trow, of its falling down about their lugs, but if it gets no more grist than it has o' late I'se e'en gie it up, and there an end on't; the Squire'll lose an old tenant to be sure, for we've had the place now, myself and my foref'thers, for the better part of a hunder' years, but what (dropping his voice and looking round him) cares he for driving an ald rooster like me from his perch, after dinging his own blood out of the big house yonder? Ou!" concluded Boniface, with a peculiar shrug, "he's a crafty old brock is our Clem: but if he meets wi' another fool to pay his hunder pounds for getting beggared, he'll be even cleverer than folk tell on."

The inference I drew from all this was that the speaker had gone down in the world, and the squire did not stand very high in his good graces.

The evening promising fine, tho' a slight shower had fallen, just sufficient to call forth its choicest incense, after commending my

daughter to an early pillow, I took a short stroll with old Norman in the direction of the Hall.

The cooler air and tempered lights of evening, with the fragrance of the shrubberies through which I passed, yielded an agreeable relief to my spirits, somewhat jaded by the dust and dazzle of the turnpike. A delicious freshness breathed from the grassy margins of my path, and the hare and coney frisked on either hand with a boldness that seemed bred from long immunity.

The track at length ended in an open space, the centre of which was occupied by the edifice I had come to view. As I seated myself for more leisurely inspection under a branching lime, and enjoyed the fumes of my favourite Cuba, I could not help reflecting that often from scenes like these the casual wayfarer draws more delight than falls to the lot of their proprietor.

It is not yon pretentious pile, thought I, the pride of birth, or plentitude of wealth that

constitute the source and secret of life's happiness, but the quiet conscience, the well-cultured mind, and susceptibility to her simpler charms, which nature, while she offers to the eye, too often denies to the fruition of the worldling, and was winding up these musings with a few farewell whiffs of my weed, when an individual came by whose jaunty step, weather-stained red coat, and gamy cast of eye seemed to bespeak a huntsman.

"Does Mr. Dallington then keep hounds, my friend?" I enquired, as I returned the salute he offered.

"Nay, nay, he keeps nane now," he replied ; bringing himself to a halt by a pivot movement ; " a did keep hunds ance, but syne the young master met his end, he downa bide the vera sight on em."

"Has he had the misfortune then to lose a son?"

"Aye, that has a, and a sore cost it was for un ; a' brake his neck over anenst yon dyke, along o' that boggling filly 'Whitefoot.'

I tould t'young master she would never face the leap, and begged un on my knees to take the bay gelding instead, that wad ha' carried un o'er that and hell gate to boot, but a wadna' heed me, and they picked un up in the dead thraw not ten minutes afterwards. The devil founder that false footed jade, for she has lost the squire as brave a lad, and me as blythe a place as there is in the county."

"And he has given up hounds then in consequence?"

"Every lug; they're a' gone now, both hunds and huntsman, to his cousin Squire Dallington o' Lymbrook, and (lowering his voice) they say as these bonny broad acres 'll travel as far too, some day, and a' because a misbegotten b——h of a mare missed her footing," (and here a fresh round of execration was poured on the offending animal).

"You maybe, han't seen his honor a passing this way?" he enquired, after relieving his brisket of its burden. "I have a word,

for him from my master; ye see he's nae greatways blessed wi means, isn't master, but just keeps the hunds for t' neebours' sake, and if they don't come the more handsomely down wi't brass, I reckon the poor whelps 'll een have to pack, and Ro. Todhunter with them; it makes a conny gap in five hundred a year—a kennel o' two-score dogs, with oat-meal up at 60."

With this professional remark my sporting friend went his way, and throwing away the end of my havannah I rose to resume mine.

The clouds had again gathered overhead, and to escape a wetting I put forth my best speed on my return.

On nearing a rustic bridge that spanned a rivulet on my way, I found it necessary to halt till two persons who were advancing over it had crossed.

They were a gentleman and lady apparently in the prime of life, whose presence bore the decided impress of gentility, yet seemed to tell,

in the drooping form and unspringy step, of some hidden grief that was preying on their health and peace.

They courteously returned my salute on meeting, and narrowly scrutinizing them as they passed, I remarked the hair of the gentleman was grey, though he must have been yet under middle age, whilst the cheek of his companion, wan and colourless, was in too faithful keeping with the joyless and unobservant eye she bent upon me. "The brother and his bride," thought I, wheeling round to take another look at them; aye, yonder as I live (for I detected a family resemblance), go my dear friend Clem and my loving lady Su," on their unjoyful path; can it be that the brother's curse has fallen, and the usurper is drinking in his Eden of the cup he so cruelly administered? Verily there is a Nemesis that deals forth our lot on earth, adjusts her balances with hair weights, and assigns us our portions with hands of fire.

A smart shower which began to fall put a

sudden stop to my meditations, and I did not reach my quarters till I had received such a share of its offerings as rendered a change of outer garments necessary.

Ordering tea to a room that had a fire in it, I opened the door that the landlord seemed to indicate, and entered an ancient chamber with a bay-window at the further end, and my chief object of research—a fire—smouldering amidst its embers on the hearth.

With the aid of some fresh fuel and an effective pair of bellows I speedily raised a cheerful blaze, and it was not till I had turned my back to this and was watching the effect of its flickering light on the quaint garniture of the apartment, that I became aware of its having another occupant.

This was an aged female, apparently in the last stage of life, who was seated in the recess of the window, her head resting on her hand, in which was still held the thread she had been lately winding from her spinning wheel, and her whole attention absorbed in the con-

templation of the outward view which, illuminated by the now risen moon, presented in its midst the pale drawn picture of Dallington Hall.

The infirmities of age had probably impaired her hearing, and it was only on my drawing near to apologise for my unwitting intrusion, that she bent on me a look of gradual consciousness.

"A bra' night, sir," she said, winding up her thread, and laying aside her wheel, "wad ye tak' a seat? I ha' been looking at the auld place syne sunset."

Seating myself for a moment in the bay, I again apologised for invading her room, but discoursing with her own thoughts, she proceeded without heeding my excuses :

"I saw ye fore-gathering with the squire and his leddy at the brig end c'en now, and ye looked ahint ye as if ye wad ha' liked to ken mair o' them; is't not sae?"

I smiled at the correctness of the old woman's observation, whilst she continued :

"See, yonder they go, with heavy hearts I trow, into the big house, which is a' their ain at last, and nane o' their kin ower nigh to scaur them with canny welcomes."

I was somewhat struck with the tone of the old woman's remarks, who, catching my thoughts, probably from my countenance, observed :

"I'm no o' these parts by birth, sir. I'm a north-country woman, and was fourscore years and ten last April day, and the better part o' these ha' I spent in yon bigging before us, which to my mind is the brightest and bonniest spot in a' creation; but, ay me! there's aye a dark corner in ilka house, and sair to say oftenest nigh the hearth-stane."

"You are well acquainted then with the Dallington family?" I remarked, as she paused to sigh.

"Acquent wi't! ilka ane o' the bonny bairns ha' I dandled i' these old arms, and now after guiding them up fra' babbies, and spending the best part o' my life in sarving em, they

maun send me hither to wear out what's left amang strangers; but I winna wrang the puir bairns—weel, I wot it's only ane of them wad ha' done it, and weel, I wot wherefore, but if puir Edmund meets wi' nae friend else, he shall aye find ane as lang as Ailie Jordan lasts abune grund."

"And who then is this Edmund?" I enquired. "I believe it has been my fortune to meet with him heretofore, and I take a strong interest in his history."

"Wha was he! look ye here, sir," she replied, fumbling with her fleshless fingers about her bosom, and at length putting before me a well-executed miniature; "that's wha he was, the eldest son of Sir Edmund as was, and brother to this present Clement, and ane thing mair," she added, uttering the words in a low emphatic tone, "he was and is, and I'll ever uphaud him to be (for all that's come and gane) the true and lawfu' maister of Dallington Ha'."

After pausing awhile to recover from the

emotion with which she had spoken, she proceeded:

“ But I think ye said, sir, ye had been acquainted wi’m i’ former times ; wad ye tell now his auld nurse (for I ha’ tended him fra’ a weanlin’) a’ ye ken o’ my poor bairn ?”

I hesitated a moment to comply, for I felt that the picture I should give could neither be softened nor disguised, and ultimately I gave it in the simple guise of truth, which so wrought upon the old woman’s feelings that, bowing her head upon her knees, she wept in the utmost abandonment.

Anxious to soothe her unavailing grief, I ordered the tea-things, which had already been laid elsewhere, to be brought into the chamber, and after severally solacing ourselves with a cup of the reviving fluid, I requested to have the history of her foster-child, which, simplified for the reader’s benefit, was as follows :—

The eldest son of a Baronet of long descent and large property, it was generally expected

that, with the name, Edmund Dallington would have succeeded to the estate of his father, and hoped also by the family connections, to the position and influence acquired by the latter in the political world, as well. This prospect, however, as he grew up, became more and more doubtful of being realized.

Though far from wanting in good qualities, both of heart and head, evincing indeed occasionally marks of talent, as always of generosity, they were all in a great measure marred by a certain frivolity of mood, caprice of conduct, which at times took so much the form of imbecility as to afford matter of derisive comment to the circle of his associates and relatives. It was supposed by many (perhaps by most) that with the family acres, he had inherited an eccentricity of character which at intervals, that seemed partly periodic, had heretofore manifested itself in his line of ancestry.

As the natural result of a tendency to

mischoose his intimates, the confidence too rashly yielded, too largely lavished, had been often abused—so often, that withdrawing it by degrees from its first (and as he deemed less worthy) objects, he reposed it at last (and where is the human heart that seeks not a quarter to do this?) in concentrated strength and fullest measure on his brother next in age, Clement, whose silent profundity of character had sometimes worn the semblance of regard.

Thus, on the death of the head of the family and dispersion of its members, he had warmly invited the latter to remain as part of his household, and assist him in the management of his estates. This offer was accepted in a spirit and with an object truly diabolical.

The first act of the younger brother's gratitude was to possess himself of the affections of a young lady, who had long been an inmate of the Hall, as ward of the late baronet, and universally considered the affianced bride of the present. Hitherto she had given every

proof of a true reciprocity of affection, and notwithstanding the peculiarities of her lover, maintained her faith unshaken ; but the female heart is naturally facile, and the Mephistophelean brother so cunningly played his cards that in no great length of time he found the game his own. Whilst urging an ardent suit on his own behalf he infected her mind with suspicions of her former suitor's sanity, and it was only after its consummation that this double treason of his nearest blood relation and betrothed bride accidentally came to the knowledge of its victim. This was not all ; whilst suffering under the intolerable anguish produced by this discovery, in fact, in a condition to give the fullest colour to their views, two medical practitioners, suborned by the chief conspirator, were introduced into the house in the character of guests, and succeeded in establishing a charge of insanity against his unhappy kinsman, by which he was virtually deprived of his inheritance, and

committed to the uncontrolled custody of his arch enemy.

This was too much for a mind already tottering under its former blows, and seizing an early opportunity he effected his escape from confinement, and in his native land at least was never heard of more.

Such was the domestic tragedy that sent its victim an exile into the wilderness, and many there are, doubtless, like it, little heeded in this gadding world, but seen and noted by the all-kenning Judge, who sooner or later metes our plenteous retribution.

“They ha’ sent me hither,” wound up the old nurse, “into the land of Egypt, as I may ca’t, for saying what I’ve said to you, as if wi’ my puir breath they could squinch the justice of the Lord in heaven, but He takes the evil doer in he’s ain devices. I’m four score years and ten, and my auld een grow dim, but as sure as I see yon bonny bigging now, I see His rod at wark upon its maister.”

CHAPTER II.

It was well on towards noon next day ere we were again fairly on the road.

The delay, however, was little important, as our day's journey was to be but a short one, and we should reach our goal early in the evening—a time I always preferred for doffing travelling harness, and looking through the localities we had arrived at.

Our route lay through a rich agricultural district, resembling in the eyes of my companion the neighbourhood of her home, though touched by nature with a kindlier glow, whilst

exhibiting less largely the evidences of ingenious industry.

As we rolled over a country of unvaried flatness, mile succeeding mile of alternating grass and corn fields, I involuntarily began • contrasting its appearance with the pine-covered wilds of New Brunswick, which had so often and profoundly impressed me.

The tedious levels we were traversing had doubtless in their time been sheathed in similar fashion, the pine and the oak succeeding each other for centuries in silent vegetation and decay, till the race of man would multiply among their glades, the hut and the cottage send forth their signal smokes, and civilization, axe in hand, annihilate the last vestiges of the wilderness. Such, in the lapse of ages, had been its fate, and such would be that of the regions I had trodden in the new world, locked up as they now were in a dominant forest growth, beneath which I had myself wandered for weeks together, and over whose top a squirrel might skip its hundred

leagues without descending from its leafy carpet.

Following this train of meditation I again found myself planted in the well remembered clearing of the Far Pines, reviewed its deserted tenement, and was pensively replacing in its doorway the infantile form which had so often welcomed me, and furnished such frequent cause of subsequent anxiety, when an exclamation from my little girl awakened me to the present scene and epoch.

"O, papa!" pointing to a majestic edifice, about a mile in front, "look what a beautiful house! that must be a lord's house, pa—see how big it is!"

"Leighton Castle, as I live," I cried, rousing myself from my reverie, and collecting my senses to make an earnest survey of a spot which, as the reader may imagine, was for manifold reasons deeply interesting to me. Old Norman also got upon his legs, and resting his grizzled head on the carriage door, looked out upon the broad domain we were

passing with eyes that, for the moment, sloughed the film of age, and nostrils whose active play seemed to speak recognition of the air of his puppyhood.

Many features now occurred which vividly renewed the impressions made upon my mind during the perusal of my friend's M.S.

There was the spacious park, with the 'vernal green triumphing over the brown drapery of winter'—there the 'majestic oaks with their low breathed sighs and interwoven boughs'—now the music of purling rills met the ear, and at length the ornamental sheet of water with the stately pile upon its banks rewarded my earnest gaze.

An extensive grove of trees, threatening to intercept my view and destroy the impressions it occasioned, "Stop!" I cried out peremptorily to the postilion, "stop, on your life." The man pulled up with something of the startled air with which he would have answered a highwayman's "stand and deliver!" With an interest that might almost have been called

personal, I gave myself to the examination of the various features of the prospect.

Along this road, thought I, passed the young tutor Etheredge, on his introductory visit to Leighton; along this road—enchanted then to him—he wended so often after in the agreeable enthrallment of first love; across those lawns moved his lovely mistress, with the light hearted grace of girlhood; and before me I beheld the water where he saved her life and well nigh lost his own.

Norman on his part had been far from an uninterested observer of the scene, but rising with his fore paws on the chaise door, had scrutinized the objects I had noted with an apparent affinity of feeling. Spying a couple of dogs in the park gambolling round a figure that seemed that of a keeper, he emitted (the first time for a good twelvemonth) an obsolete half abortive howl, intended for a bark, which was answered by the others with high and resonant yellings, as though in derision of his superannuated efforts.

The trio passed on, and other groups became observable dotting the grounds in various directions.

I now remembered it was the festival week, and ordered the driver to proceed at once to the hotel that we might learn betimes our chance of accommodation.

Passing the park gate, where I was half-prepared to see the barouche issue forth with its charming inmate, we drew up at a plain substantial building which bore the arms of the neighbouring peer, and were received with something of old-fashioned courtesy by its landlady, Mrs. Marton.

On enquiring our prospects of entertainment, we were informed they depended entirely (the place having been unusually full for some days past) upon the departure of a party whose intentions were as yet unknown.

While making my interrogations I felt a familiar touch on the shoulder, and turning round encountered the "confirmed" visage

of my friend and father-in-law, Mr. Dalham. After the usual felicitations of the meeting :

“ I can settle,” he said, “ Mrs. Marton’s difficulty at once ; her guests are clients of mine, and are about to depart almost instanter. I am unfortunately obliged to accompany them, having business to transact at ———, but I will walk over here to-morrow evening and take tea with you.”

I urged him to come and share a bottle of port with me at dinner, but this he thought he could scarce accomplish, “ as our new married heir presumptive,” said he, emphasizing the word, “ is to give his grand regale to the farmers to-morrow, and I shall have to attend in virtue of my office. If you should feel disposed to join us, I think I can manage to secure a chair for you ; I come over here,” he added, seeing his friends approach, “ as seldom as I can, for though poor old Lord Leighton regards me, I believe, with friendly feelings, the ‘ rising sun,’ for certain reasons

of his own, turns on his humble servant a somewhat clouded face."

His friends now came up, and our luggage having been removed and the post-boy paid, we entered the inn and were shown into an upper chamber, which commanded a fine view of the adjoining domain.

It was now about half-past four p.m., and as the most suitable refreshment, after a hot drive in the morning sun, we ordered tea.

Whilst the hostess was arranging the tray, I remarked to her how large an assemblage of company her noble landlord seemed to be entertaining.

"Aye, sir, there's a deal of quality folk come down to the merry-makings, but he doesn't much fash himself about them; indeed, you may see him walking about his grounds more like a stranger himself than the master of well nigh half the county. Poor gentleman, he has never been rightly his own man since that sad business of leddy Lowra's

—it has fairly ta'en the heart out of him; gentle or simple, we must all have our crosses. We've some nice cold chicken, sir, and a real Leighton ham, if yourself or the young lady has a fancy that way; we fatten them on the mast of the park oaks yonder. Ah, he was ever our kind landlord, the poor old Earl; but if he takes on as he has done o' late, I fear his days will be but short in the land; we shall see different times, I trow, when he is gone;" and hearing herself summoned from below, our good hostess now left us to our refection, with a valedictory "Try the ham, sir?"

When seasoned by a sufficient amount of exercise, there is no little enjoyment to be found in "taking one's ease in his Inn," a truth we proved to our satisfaction in the hour we devoted to the purpose.

It was a beautiful spring evening, and refreshed by the showers of the previous night, a miscellany of sweetest perfumes from sweetbriar, wallflower, rose and hawthorn, stole

upon the senses through the open casement. From the throngs in the neighbouring grounds were heard the distance-softened sounds of careless conversation or light-hearted laughter, whilst troops of pleasure-seekers strolled along the road hard by, whose festal airs seemed chidden by the sober looks of the hard-worked and home-returning peasant.

As it was desirable to make the most of the evening, we remained no longer over our meal than was necessary, and my daughter appearing unfatigued by her short day's work, I took her hand and walked into the park, paged as usual by the aged bloodhound.

The place had, by this, assumed a somewhat deserted look, the groups that had thronged it having imperceptibly drained away. The sound of music in the direction of the castle served presently to explain the mystery, the guests having probably exchanged the open air for entertainment of a more special kind within doors.

This circumstance I did not much regret,

wishing to enjoy undisturbed the beauties of the deserted scene, and meditations it naturally gave rise to.

Little Susan, in the briskest spirits, had been gambolling on the turf with Norman, and as I entered a shady alley that diverged from the main road, ran ahead after the old dog, which had suddenly taken the lead. The sounds of persons speaking presently met my ear, and as I drew near a retired arbour a little apart from the pathway, I heard a voice exclaim in earnest tones, "In the name of G—d, child, where got you this?"

On arriving at the spot a striking scene presented itself.

My old time-stricken hound was standing with his fore paws on the knees of an old gentleman, who was seated in the recess, holding in his hand my friend Lord Ardca-pell's locket, which I had somewhat incautiously entrusted to my little girl, and by her in a fit of sportiveness, had been slipped round the animal's neck. The young truant herself

was standing beside the dog, and in course of being questioned after the above fashion as I made my appearance.

“In the name of Heaven, where got you this?” repeated the old man. He was habited in plain attire, his hat lay on the bench beside him, and whilst with one hand he grasped my valued souvenir, with the other rested on a walking-stick in the attitude of one lately roused from meditation. His air and presence were singularly venerable, and bore every token of having once been noble and commanding.

The extreme whiteness of his hair seemed to tell of something more than age, so remarkably was it contrasted with the vivid brilliancy of his hazel eye, which, though betokening unusual fire and force of mind, was crossed from time to time by what seemed the shooting lights of some operant sorrow or internal strife.

Regarding the miniature he held with a fixed and earnest gaze, he addressed this

second question to myself as I came up, and waited with suspended breath for a reply.

"It is a portrait," I returned, "of a valued friend of mine who died many years ago abroad, but whose virtues are still cherished by those who had the happiness to know her."

"Her name?"

"Was Jermyn."

"Ah, then, it cannot be, yet how like! it is the very face of my poor pet; yea, as I live, it must be she; did you not say her name was Farle—that is, Etheredge?"

"Her name, sir," (catching a suspicion as to how the case stood) "when I knew her, was Jermyn; she was the wife of a friend I had of that name, entirely worthy of her, and now also long since dead."

"'Tis strange! those are my Laura's very lineaments—her look, and that presented by no common skill; this dog, too, seems to have a cast of her favourite hound about it; ho! Norman, how now, old boy?" patting the

animal's head, which briskened up, wagged its tail, and looked more like old Norman than ever. "He must have been dead, too, though long ago, the all that would remain to her of the sports and loves of Leighton! Alack! how our feelings fool us!"

The old man sighed—he thought he had been mocked by that mirage which haunts the desolations of the soul like those of nature, the phantoms of fond and unfulfilled desire—but he was wrong; that was indeed his daughter's image, and that the living identity of her favourite, but many cogent reasons compelled me to withhold the truth from him.

"Would it be trenching," he added, "too much on your generosity, to beg (if I might not buy) this object of you? It is for various reasons of much interest to me."

"Pardon me," I replied, "if I say I cannot part with a memorial I so greatly value."

"Whatever reason you may have for prizing it, the person who now speaks to you

has at least a hundred fold. You will not, at least refuse it to me for a few days, that I may have a copy taken by an artist of repute now in the neighbourhood ; my name is Philip Farleton, and I live in that large house yonder by the water."

I could not well avoid complying with this moderate request, so detached the locket from the dog's neck, and gave it him, mentioning at the same time, that as my stay would be but brief I should wish to have it returned as soon as possible. This he engaged should be done, and added that if I had come hither in honor of his nephew's nuptials he should think himself favoured by my being his guest till the work was finished..

This arrangement I had my own reasons for declining, which I did in terms of due courtesy, and then proceeded on my ramble.

As we seated ourselves in the course of it under a noble oak that stood in front of the ancient part of the mansion, and which I had every reason to believe was the "trysting

tree," mentioned in the memoir, my thoughts naturally recurred to the recent scene and the interesting old man I had just parted from. He, too, feels no less than "My dear friend, Clem," that the wealth he holds is of little avail to fill up the void left by his daughter's loss; the bauble he has begged of me is probably now more prized than all his vast possessions put together.

Of all the evils that embitter life and render its enjoyments valueless, among the foremost stand the rankling griefs of family schisms and severances. Most of our ills we can meet beyond our thresholds, and quell or submit to with unblenching spirits, but these assail us at our very hearthstones, divide ourselves against ourselves, and kindle in the breast that civil strife which admits neither of triumph nor escape.

There is that in the father's eye that tells too plainly of this cruel warfare, yet something withal that seems to show the better instincts of his nature had revived in him, and

that could his banished child have been restored, it would have been a day of holiest triumph to them both. This fate, alas, forbade, but what if her daughter—the young fawn—could be discovered to rekindle the old man's life and cheer its declining stage? Could this but be, could the tone of his existence be renewed, and those halls now ringing with the mirth of strangers—and broad estates on the point of passing to a reprobate, be retained to his line and reopened to his enjoyment, it were worth devoting half a life-time to accomplish it.

As the evening advanced, the moon had lighted up the nearer portion of the castle, and I perceived my daughter gazing with a look of awe at its frowning bastions and beetling wall. The ivy was rustling on its battlements—the ensign of their ravager—time. After the close siege of centuries he had stormed the strong place at last, and his banner waving in the night-wind over ramparts breached by his artillery, presented an

emphatic picture of the might that "overcometh all things."

Immersed in meditations arising from my late rencontre, and tempered with a pleasing sadness by the grave yet lovely scene I looked at—suggesting many a moral to my thoughts—the time wore imperceptibly on till the increased bustle at the mansion, the twinkling of bells, and the flashing of lights bespoke the end of the entertainment and departure of the guests. Admonished of the lateness of the hour, we put ourselves abruptly in motion, and shortly after reaching the park road fell in with the main file of the retiring throng.

"Well," said a well-dressed young man in front, who had the air of a country clergyman, "he has done his best to please us, that's certain, and amidst such a motley crowd it was truly no easy task; but to my taste he over-does it—he seems as if he were acting a part, and I should not wonder after all if he hid a fair share of teeth and claws beneath all those smiles and suavities."

"Aye, aye," observed an old top-booted farmer, behind me, to his companion, "a's varra weel—a's a' varra weel of's outwards, but holler, holler—washed metal I doubt; I seed him laughing thro the tail of's 'ee, at these boots o' mine, as who should say that's not the sort o' gear for this spot; but I can tell his squireship, for he's nae lord after all, this is not the first time they've stood there, and afore better men than himself too; for I was at the old Arl's wedding now nigh forty year ago, when top-boots was considered a pleasin' featur', and there was always a glass o' grog in store when folk got their fill o' caperin'. Lord knows I did what I could i' that way, but a sma' matter winds me now, and wad ye believe it, all I could lay hold on for the love o' —— was a savvy biscuit and some sour pump water; times is sadly altering, to my mind, Cuddy."

These observations of the old agriculturist were accompanied by sundry lurches to the right and left which, to those fond of referring

to first causes, might have inspired some doubt as to the limited extent of his indulgences.

Fearful lest some of his evolutions might jeopardize my little charge, I made a flank movement and fell to the rear. Two old women were hobbling on with the slow and difficult steps of age.

"Nay, cummer," replied one to something addressed to her by the other, "it doesn't stir my heart a bit as it used to—a' this feasting and dancing, and merry making—for I ken too weel what it a' ends in. It seems but yesterday the ould 'Arl (Lord Farleton 'a was then) had *his* time on't, and the bonny young bride cam' down fro' Lunnon and made all our hearts as lightsome as her own; weel, cummer, ye ken as weel as me how afore the year was out she was ligging stiff and stark in the churchyard. E'en sae that winsome young quean, leddy Lowra, (it fairly gives me the heart grip to think on't,) it was after one o' these unsonsy frolics she was spirited away

by her teacher, and what has become o' the bonny bird none seem to ken or care for ; and sae, cummer, when I see a' these vanities astir I say, let the young squire look ahint him as weel as forrards, and tak' heed a' na come by a slip as weel as 's kinsfold."

We had by this entered the high road nearly "opposite our hotel," whose welcome accommodation we lost no time in resorting to.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day broke favorably for the event that was chiefly to signalise it in the quiet neighbourhood of Leighton, viz., the entertainment of the Earl's numerous tenantry by their prospective landlord.

I was awakened at an early hour by the cawing of the rooks, as they fluttered and fought round the oak trees that held their nests and young, making the air echo with pleasant and beseeching music.

As it seemed to convey a tacit reproach on my own indolence, I forthwith arose, and,

sketch book in hand, went forth to enjoy the beauties of the park by sunrise.

Overcome by the indulgences of the previous day not a soul was as yet abroad, and choosing the first path that presented itself, I sauntered along in quest of a subject for my pencil. The grass being too long and wet to venture on, I found my range in this respect somewhat restricted, and moreover had not been long upon the move when I felt the unpleasant conviction I was being followed.

Now guides to prescribe one's steps, and hangers on to haunt them, have ever been viewed by me in the light of especial nuisances. In the present case, moreover, considering the promiscuous nature of the crowds gathered by the occasion, I thought it not improbable I might have been selected through some mistake by the police as an appropriate object for their attentions.

Feeling after awhile somewhat out of humour at this surveillance I retraced my steps, and on meeting my persevering follower, en-

quired whether I was trespassing that he considered it needful to give such close attendance. The fellow, who was a square-set, strong-looking rustic, dressed after the fashion of a gamekeeper, looked rather sheepish at my challenge, stammered out something about his being "fond o' lookin at a fine dog," referring to Norman who was with me, "that that un' there was so like a prime cretur' he had been acquen' wi' some long time ago he could a most ha' sworn it had been the same. Supposed there was some mistake, but hoped there was no offence," and with a good many reverted looks proceeded under correction on his way.

The object of his interest during this short dialogue had on his own part been describing sundry circles round the speaker, which, taken together with its side long glances, half-wary, half-familiar, could they have been rendered into "King's English," would, as it seemed to me, have made a pretty close counterpart of his own speech.

When he rejoined me there was a sly sparkle in the corner of his old eyes, as though he were enjoying a quiet joke in his own way.

It presently occurred to me that our best plan of proceedings would be to get an early breakfast, and then pursue our walk on an extended scale through the grounds and neighbourhood until noon, when we might either join the dinner party or rest ourselves at the inn as we thought best. I therefore returned, and after a substantial meal set forth once more with my daughter on our round of exploration.

Some furlongs from the hotel we turned up a bye lane that seemed to be the boundary on that side of the park, and after following it for a mile or so reached a bridge that spanned a well sized brook, and commanded on either hand a bewitching view of green and dew-sprent meads, over which the fine spring morning was shedding its early blandishments.

Spreading my cloak upon the parapet we seated ourselves thereon, and admired at our

ease this choice morceau of English landscape. The green and juicy meadows were still floating with the undispersed night mists, which, permeated by the early sunbeams, shone doubly white and luminous, amusing the eye with the fantastic wreaths they sent athwart the neighbouring woods. A herd of kine, as they stood by their still marked lairs, were lowing impatiently for the milk-maid, and blended their sonorous music with the murmurs of the brook beneath us. On the greensward of the meadows innumerable flowers became one by one discernible through the thinning vapour, the primrose and hyacinth pre-eminent, enchanting the eye with their simple yet inexplicable beauty, and impressing the heart and senses with an irresistible sentiment of happiness.

While listening to the Castle breakfast bell as it sent its jocund echoes through this Claude-like scene, a six-horse wain, laden with heavy furniture, came up, and the leaders, through the driver's heedlessness, making a

sudden side-move to the bridge end, where there was a watering-place, confined us, together with two young ladies who had casually come up at the moment, to a narrow space beside the parapet, which the ponderous wheels of the vehicle were now threatening to invade.

The little wall, from the sharpness of its coping, offering no standing place, I took my little girl in my arms and leaped over it into the brook below, which happened fortunately to be shallow, calling upon my companions to do the same.

One of them following my advice, was duly received in my arms ; but the other, overcome by her alarm, remained motionless where she stood, and would probably have incurred some serious injury, had it not been for the prompt action of the teamster, who, giving one shaft horse a smart stroke with his whip, and the other an adroit pull by the reins, suddenly diverted the waggon's course, and shortly brought it to a stand-still.

After giving a sharp rebuke to the lad, and due congratulations to the poor girl who had been placed in such imminent jeopardy, Susan and myself proceeded on our road, but had not taken many steps when a low call from one of the fair strangers again brought us to a stop. Hastily running up, she apologized for the trouble she had given me, and expressing her fear that I was wet, invited us to accompany herself and sister to her father's house, which she affirmed was close at hand.

As her manner was both frank and lady-like, and her surmise as to my state undoubtedly correct, I accepted the offer thankfully, and soon found myself at their abode, which proved to be the village parsonage, their father being vicar of the parish.

After a short statement of the occurrence that had introduced us to him, he received us with much amenity, supplied me with a change of nether raiment, and invited us to partake of an early dinner.

As it wanted, however, some hours to the

time, in order to fill up the interval, he proposed a stroll through his rather extensive garden, and (as he was occupied himself by business) commissioned Charlotte (the sprightly girl, who had been so alert in her movements at the bridge), to act as my conductress.

The grounds were laid out with considerable taste, and there being a good deal of rock about them, my charming guide pointed out how effectually this feature (such a stumbling block to most horticulturists), had been turned to account by her own and her sister's management.

"That is Fanny's bed," said she, showing me a raised border filled with choice and well-cared-for exotics; "and this," pointing to a range of rockery exquisitely disposed, "is mine. Fanny's taste is for foreigners, mine for natives; and yonder you see gathered all the wild flowers I have been able to procure for love or money, from all the wild and wasteful places in the land; I hope you admire them," she added, shaking her hair from her face, and smiling sunnily.

I assured her I did so vastly, and should rejoice to become a contributor to her collection, for the first of the two considerations she had mentioned.

"Here is one," plucking a wild geranium from its nest, and presenting it to me, "that came from the Peak of Derbyshire, and nearly cost me a broken neck in getting it; I assure you I had to jump almost my own height into a brook to do so."

Fanny here maliciously remarked, "Yes, and without falling so soft as you did to-day, either," which sent the blood into her sister's cheeks and covered her with momentary confusion.

Seeing something of a smile upon my face, produced by this little by-play, Fanny's glee became exuberant, and running to her own flower bed she nipped off a carnation, which she put into my hands, asking me which of the two offerings I liked the most.

Carefully inserting it in my other lappel, I assured her I was an admirer of beauty in every form, both native and exotic, vegetable

and animal, and could not help regarding the two flowers as emblems of the handsome donors.

“ There—if you had not made so dutiful an answer I question whether I should have restored you this precious casket (handing me a cigar case I had left behind while changing my clothes) which I suppose is intended for some of the vegetable beauties you venerate, in an embalmed state. Now, as we don’t admit Mrs. Grundy into these grounds, you have our free permission to use and enjoy the contents as you list ; in fact, we rather like the smell than otherwise in the open air.”

I immediately shewed my sense of their condescension by lighting a weed at once, and proceeded with my two guides on our perambulations.

Charlotte evidently enjoyed her functions, and her lively humour and *naïve* air had, I confess, a decidedly animating effect upon myself. Now, she shot down some shady alley, and was back again ere I had taken

three steps in her wake ; now she peered into the beehives whilst rapidly relating some anecdote connected with them ; then called her pet fowls around her and fed them with wheat from her own pocket, and ended her achievements by climbing into an apple tree and tossing down some of the fairest fruit into my hat.

The dinner bell rang at last, and like many other aspiring characters, poor Charlotte found it more easy to mount to than descend from her elevation. " Now, Charly," quoth her bantering sister from underneath, " You're fast again ; I knew you would be getting into a dilemma, and there you are in the very horns as it were ; never mind, you are a sure card at leaping, and here is Mr. Ruysdale with his arms open, all ready to break your fall again."

" Upon my word, Fanny, you get more wicked every day ; I won't trouble Mr. Ruysdale this turn ; I might spoil the precious carnation, my dear, as well as that cigar he seems to

be so much enjoying ; here's papa will play the good Samaritan," and into the paternal arms she accordingly descended with her raiment all torn, locks dishevelled, eyes like diamonds, and cheeks all fire.

Stimulated by our morning's exercise, we partook with much relish of the simple and wholesome fare we sat down to, and when the cloth was removed, with no less zest, of the bottle of good port that succeeded it.

The conversation recurred to the incidents of the morning, and from them passed to the proceedings at the castle, to which it appeared the waggon and its load were bound.

"Mr. Farleton," drily remarked my host as he shelled some nuts Fanny had cracked for him, "seems to be setting up grandee in good style, and if it were not for his wild unreliable nature we might augur a happy time for his new bride, who all agree is a very amiable woman ; set down, however, as she is, among half a dozen mistresses, I fear her beatitude will be of short duration, and the worm at

the core soon mocking the magnificence without. She has already condescended to visit us here.

"Yes, Mr. Ruysdale, and invited us over to the festivities, and naughty papa there wouldn't let us go."

"No," returned he, with a stern and austere air, "high as he is, and our next neighbour to boot (more the pity), none of my family shall ever share the hospitalities of Mr. Cyrus Farleton." He mused a moment and then added, "as I understand, you are nearly related to Mr. Dalham, who has long been chief agent of the family, and an intimate friend also of my own, I speak to you, as you no doubt perceive, with some degree of freedom on these matters. When we first came here, we (alluding to the former subject of his comments) were on very friendly terms together, and might yet have remained so, but for his making me, with a want of caution I cannot at all account for, a proposal (I suppose he thought he held the parish parson

between his finger and thumb) which I should want terms to designate as it deserves. I was offered considerable preferment, and Charlotte and Fanny there might have now been figuring in a far higher sphere if—”

“If what, papa?” cried the two girls in a breath.

“If only, children, your father would have consented to become a villain by tampering with certain records in his charge. Well, as you may conceive, I expressed my mind as both feeling and duty dictated, at this insult, as well as upon some other passages in his life which were matter of much scandal in the neighbourhood, and our friendly relations in consequence were brought to a decisive close. Not long ago, moreover, he one night nearly rode over my Charlotte as she was returning home from a sick visit, and aggravated his drunken heedlessness by language of the greatest insolence. So that, at present, between him and me there is, as I may say, a great gulf fixed, which neither of us I fancy

will much care to overpass. For himself, I have many misgivings, and unless he reforms (if that indeed may repair the past) am confident some of these clouds of strange suspicion that surround him, will discharge their lightnings some day, and finish his career in a way he little looks for."

Perceiving the sun slanting into the apartment, I at length made a motion to depart, whereupon our good host proposed to accompany us part of the way back, and rang the bell for his daughters' cloaks, which were presently brought in by a staid middle-aged domestic.

While the young ladies were mantling themselves, I remarked, "Mr. Farleton being such as you describe him, his succession to the estates must add greatly to Lord Leighton's regret at the loss of his amiable daughter."

"Undoubtedly, and to that of every one who knew her, besides; but whilst the old man is nursing a futile grief on this score, there are some hardy enough to affirm she is not

dead at all; others, that she died and left a child; and that old woman you saw in the room just now, stoutly maintains the ready-handed nephew has put both one and the other out of the way himself. As far as intrigue would serve his ends, I have my own reasons for believing he would not have scrupled a moment to employ it. The subject still retains so much of mystery that, notwithstanding the lapse of time, it is generally talked of by the neighbours in an under-breath."

Mr. Felton (such was my reverend entertainer's name) then took up his hat, bound with the widower's crape, somewhat dashed by time, and, together with his daughters, set me on my way through the glebe-land till we reached the turnpike road.

Here he took his leave, and here I bade adieu to the two charming girls whose acquaintance I had so suddenly made, pleading with much earnestness and many radiant smiles for its renewal. It was the last, how-

ever, I was destined to see of them. They were two of those stars that shoot across our path when least expected, gladdening us for the moment, and then, "like the lost Pleiad," meeting our gaze no more.

CHAPTER IV.

At the other side of the highway was the park postern, passing through which we directed our steps towards a grove we saw at some distance, where, from the loud voices that issued from it, conviviality seemed to have reached its climax.

The scene of revelry was a green glade almost enclosed by fine old oaks, where long tables had been laid out, well charged with solid and satisfying fare. Around them were seated the yeomen and gentry of the neighbourhood, who, having appeased the more pressing calls of appetite, were now dallying

over their wine, and listening with frequent plaudits (none the less lusty for its influence) to the address of an individual who was holding forth at the upper end of the board.

Not far from this position the quick eyes of my daughter soon discovered her grandfather, and, deeming myself privileged by the invitation he had given me, we availed ourselves of the first vacancy to take our places near him.

The chairman appeared to be bringing to a close an address he had been delivering to the company upon agricultural and other matters of mutual concernment.

His face, I fancied, was not wholly unfamiliar to me, though where and when I might have seen it altogether passed my recollection.

At the first practicable moment Dalham remarked to me (doubtless with a view to information) "Mr. Farleton's observations seem very just."

Mr. Farleton! that then was the Hon.

Cyrus Farleton, whose character and antecedents were so little qualified to gain my regard.

There seemed little in his appearance at first sight to justify this impression ; his speech was fluent and sensible, his manner easy and self-possessed, and his person, though not handsome, showing the fine traits and thorough-bred bearing of high birth ; but no one who watched his countenance closely could avoid being struck with its strongly vulpine cast (an impression strengthened by the colour of his hair and whiskers), or feeling after the survey that his chief instinct, his leading moral attribute, was craft.

The noisy cheers that graced his periods—mistimed and exaggerated, seemed more the effect of the good fare than any particular admiration of the speaker, and were easily intelligible when it was remembered that the hearers, being chiefly of the family tenantry, were precluded by their position from making large sacrifices to their sincerity.

Yet tho' above board there was shewn this general submission to the sentiments and position of the chairman, below it sounds of mutiny were heard which neither fear nor favor seemed availing to suppress.

As the speaker in the course of his peroration alluded to the growing infirmities of his uncle, touched on the family loss he had sustained, and announced his own assumption (by his lordship's wish) of the control and management of his property, he was greeted at every sentence from underneath by a low but most determined growl.

I was on thorns to think it might be poor old Norman thus misconducting himself, and attempted to administer a monition to him with my toe. The salute, however, by mischance, alighted on the shins of my top booted friend, farmer Topkins, who after lustily declaring his opinion that "The maut had got abune the meal wi' that chap anyhow," being himself concerned in liquor, lost his balance in attempting to rub the injured

part, and descended, amid the laughter of the company, to the *Dii inferi* of the dinner world, where being still further aggrieved by sundry kicks and pokes intended for the canine culprit, with his dolorous cries of "What are ye punchin' on—d'ye think one's made o' baggin'," he completed the hilarious disorder of the occasion.

There are probably few orators, who could have borne with equanimity interruptions so fatal to what was intended to be a fluent and effective harangue, and Cyrus Farleton was certainly not one of these elect.

His limited stock of patience being exhausted by the submahogany discord of the farmer and the dog, he angrily ordered the keeper to be called, and after a sound rating for neglect of duty, charged him to seize forthwith the latter animal and have him shot.

Deeming his words the effect of shortlived wrath, and not wishing to disturb the com-

pany, I resisted the impulse which I felt to interpose, and awaited the issue of the scene.

Submitting to the wonderful influence possessed by some individuals over the brute species, the animal, which had baffled all our efforts to unkennel it, came forth at the keeper's call, and a curious scene of silent gratulation followed; the man (for the moment oblivious of his orders), absorbed in a close inspection of the hound, the latter reciprocating his attentions with the greatest good will imaginable.

The irritated master, seeing what he considered this insolent trifling with his injunctions, repeated them in a still more peremptory tone, when the keeper, his eyes still fixed upon the dog, replied with more boldness than might have been expected.

"If it please your honor, I couldn't lay hands on the cretur no ways, for, howsoever, he's got here, it's old Norman himself come back, as sure as my name's Joe Blayfield."

"Norman, idiot! what Norman? you must

be as mad as the dog ; take it, I say, and do my bidding, or you'll not be Joe Blayfield much longer in my service."

"Norman, your honor, as left us that sad time we lost leddy Lowra, sixteen years ago and more ; I could tell the pup, for all it has got so grey, among a thousand, for I wormed and waterclawed him myself, and barring age and that ugly wale along his ribs, there stands the ould warrior as on the day he left us, the best hound that ever laid nose to green-sward."

His master heard this speech with a passion that was rapidly mounting from the red to the white stage, and his next words were in the low deep tone that is usually the precursor of an explosion.

"Did you hear my orders, fellow, or not? Here, Smith, (in a thundering voice to an underkeeper), take that crazy brute from the crazier fool that holds it, and as you value your place let it be made safe before sunset, and harkee! as yon blockhead seems to have

lost the power of doing his duty, do you take it from him and be henceforth head keeper at Leighton."

"I hope your honor," replied the deposed but undaunted official, in respectful but earnest tone, "will think twice before you kill a cretur the 'arl always set so much store by, for it was leddy Lowra's favorite pup, and now its turned up its naeways unlikely, (for I trow it would ne'er ha left her), her leddyship may turn up wi't, for all folk say to the contrairry; it's not all true that aye meet ane's lugs, and folk are sometimes killed afore they die, tho' nathless your honor kens best about that matter."

There seemed little in these words, uttered in all simplicity, to account to the greater part of the company for their extraordinary effect upon the person they were addressed to; I say, the greater part—for there was one exception, and that was myself.

As they were uttered, the hon. Cyrus Farleton remained in a state of astonished im-

mobility, with one hand clutching the glass before him, the other drawn up with clenched fingers, as though grasping an airy dagger, and his countenance, bereft of all coloring by the reaction of wrath, or some more fell emotion, turned with a vengeful stare upon the speaker. It was at this moment, when, facing his outspoken servant, the pallor of his features exposed the telltale scar in full relief, and presented his portrait in all its old significance, the astounding consciousness crept over me, that in the individual before me, I beheld the stranger we had rescued from the bear in America—the mysterious inmate of the woodland tavern.

I felt so confounded at this discovery that the fate of the hound, and further treatment of the offending hind were lost at once to my observation, which, as the disconcerted chairman recovered by degrees his composure, became fixed immoveably upon his countenance. As I thus gazed at it, there rushed into my

mind a crowd of confirmatory circumstances to assure me beyond all doubt of his identity, and fill me with a host of thoughts all tending to his crimination.

Whilst still absorbed in this mental recordation, insensible to all that passed around, I felt my arm nudged by my father-in-law, who must have been both scandalized and alarmed at my apparently strange demeanour, and now made me a motion to withdraw. Wrapt as I was in my thoughts, I mechanically complied.

"Are you not well, Philip?" asked he, in a tone of concern. "You did not take much wine, I think."

"He's a kidnapper," quoth I. (Susan). "A kidnapper, pa! A conspirator—a grasping, ruthless, conscienceless usurper—perhaps a murderer."

"Come, my dear sir, you are ill; you've been walking too long this morning on an empty stomach, and need medical aid."

“ The dog too knew him—

‘ Can these things be,
And overcome us like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder ? ’ ”

returned I, with my gaze turned towards the heavens.

He, on his part, after looking earnestly in my face, with a ‘lunatico inquirendo’ sort of expression, quietly led the way to an arbour near at hand, where we again seated ourselves and endeavoured to converse more coherently.

Susan was sent off to play, and I then informed him of the momentous discovery. I had made, pointed out the conclusions to be drawn from it, and the wonderful light it gave us for fathoming the mystery to the bottom.

Inclined to credit the facts from matter within his own knowledge, he confessed it was the strongest *prima facie* case of multiform villany he had ever either heard or read of.

“ But how are we to bring it home, my dear sir, how are we to bring it home ? ” he would repeat, musingly. “ That is the ques-

tion; how is the lost one to be found? how, her identity to be established? we have a tangled skein to wind off yet, depend upon it."

I answered that to this duty which I considered sacred, and to which indeed I was virtually pledged, I intended from that moment to devote myself, nor would ask further time ere setting about it than was necessary to prepare myself for my task.

"If such be indeed your resolution, I will second you with all my power, and to-morrow shall perhaps be able to furnish you with means for more effectually carrying it out. Meet me, if possible, at Mr. Felton's by eleven o'clock in the forenoon."

We were about to separate when two persons walked past whom Dalham declared to be the two keepers, Blayfield and Smith, charged in all probability with the fate of the sentenced bloodhound.

The latter of the two was leading the dog in a leash, protesting he was fairly "banged"

how to deal with the "cretur;" that it went to his heart to "do for it," yet feared if he did not, that he should be as good as "done for" himself.

"Never fear a straw about the matter, Bill," answered Blayfield, "its time's not come yet, take my word for't. When th'ould master knows how the game stands (and know he shall afore another hour's past), I'll warrant its safe keeping to the last hair on its tail; and as for you and me, why th'ould lord made me what I am twenty year ago, and I much misken him if he's the man to fling off an old sarvant as he would a brast dog leash. He'll mind, too, the time when I larned her young leddyship to ride, and for as dead and gone as they say she is, that's a herb o' grace 'll heal many a sore for old Joe yet."

"Aye, but it mayn't sarve young Bill, though," returned the other.

"Hout away, man, keep thy doe's heart up. I'll get a word in for thee, never fear, and

make the old hound there carry us both out of the muck."

"Let us follow them," said Dalham to me, in a whisper, "and see what comes of this queer coil," and, taking my arm, led me at some little distance in their steps. On reaching the mansion the two functionaries disappeared among the offices, whilst ourselves proceeded onward towards the library, where my companion thought we might get a view through the windows of the coming scene.

A clump of shrubbery offering a suitable hiding-place, we ensconced ourselves therein, and had not waited many minutes when the sound of voices within showed the parties concerned had already got to business.

"Jump up there," said Dalham, pointing to a narrow light through which he had taken a short peep; "you'll get a better view of it; he's giving it him all by the square, sure enough."

Mounting to the ancient loophole he had

indicated, I obtained a full view of the noble apartment it lighted; but ere I had well observed its living occupants, my eyes became involuntarily fixed on an object that had far more interest for me.

Traced to the life by surpassing skill, and illumined by the yellow light that streamed through the opposite windows, hung the portrait of our withered lily of the back woods—Lady Ardcapell, taken at the age of girlhood, in the fancy costume of a wood nymph, her floating hair, flexile form and sprightly features presenting the most perfect embodiment of the character.

I was so entranced with my survey, that it required a pretty smart tug from my companion (who had heard steps approaching) to detach me from my perch. To his enquiry as to how matters had gone off inside, I was compelled to confess my utter ignorance, having neither seen nor heard anything that had passed.

The approaching steps proved to be those

of the two keepers, the elder one having rejoined his associate, and as far as we could judge by their discourse, achieved the desired success.

We were in hopes they would have passed without perceiving us, but the unlucky Norman having winded his master, soon discovered our concealment to the rangers, by his noisy freaks of salutation.

It appeared they were in quest of us, and Blayfield coming up to me enquired whether I was "the gen'leman as belonged to that there dog."

Having admitted the connection, he then gave me to understand the earl was desirous of speaking with me in the "libry."

Shrewdly suspecting what was the object of this invitation, I held a short consultation with Dalham ere giving a reply, when having agreed to suppress all facts that might encourage futile hope or awaken troublesome suspicion, I intimated to the man my readiness to attend his master.

On entering the library I found the aged nobleman slowly pacing it, absorbed in thought. After informing me he hoped to return my miniature on the morrow, he put several new questions to me as to the parties I had received it from. To these I answered as on the former occasion, giving a brief description of their place of abode, the manner in which I first made their acquaintance, and the circumstances attending their deaths (on these two latter points I observed the Earl to be much moved) and added that I had taken them at the time to be persons of superior station, forced probably by some family dissension or distress into a sphere of life so uncongenial to their character and unfavorable to their prospects.

Lord Leighton, as I have said, listened to all this with much secret emotion, and then said, speaking to himself:—

“Ah, I fear there can be no doubt of it then; it has all fallen out as it is reported,

and the child you say (turning earnestly to me) perished in the fire."

Truth on the one hand forbidding me to affirm, and policy, to deny this, I briefly recounted the circumstances of my last visit to the Far Pines, and left him to draw his own conclusion.

It was of course anything but consolatory, and kept him some time in melancholy self-communion, then passing to the portrait on the wall, "That," said he, pointing to it sadly and solemnly, "is the lady whose miniature you possess, and whose favourite dog is lying at your feet; that is she whose funeral (he here experienced some difficulty in proceeding) you attended when the claims of nature were forgotten by her nearest kindred, and in that figure you see what was once, and might have been still, the cherished child of a foolish old man, had not pride and passion stepped between and—" the remainder of the speech was lost in a low self-accusing mutter.

"To one," he continued, after in some measure overcoming his feelings, "whose kind offices consoled her latter moments, it is needless to say how deep I feel my debt, and how pleased I should be if you could suggest any means of my repaying it."

I could only reply that any little service I had rendered was its own full reward, and ventured to add that though Providence tries us often with heavy losses, it generally has in store a restoration or a recompense.

Fearing lest I might become more communicative than was meet, I made an early movement of departure, and after receiving a pressing invitation to visit his lordship whenever my convenience allowed, took my leave.

Seldom has repose been more sedulously wooed than when I threw myself on my bed at the Leighton Arms that night, after the strange and stirring incidents of the day, but the skittish power eluded my embrace and left my mind a prey to the thick coming thoughts which they suggested. The various

scenes and circumstances I had witnessed in America, in relation to the plot so strangely brought to light, returned on me with the vivid force of yesterday. In particular, the clandestine presence of the chief culprit in the neighbourhood of those who were notoriously the main obstacles to his advancement; his ejaculations in the snow storm and at the tavern; above all, that damning sentence to one whose association was in itself a proof of guilt, "You shall have a dollar for every mile you take her," together with his apparition at Lord Ardcapell's window the night before his death, and possession of the all-important marriage certificate, recurred unceasingly to my mind, till they wove themselves by degrees into an harmonious web of evidence, which left not a tittle of doubt as to Cyrus Farleton's villany. Yes, under that roof within my view, he lay congratulating himself on his apparent fortune, and indulging in fond dreams of its continuance; whilst far over the wide Atlantic, my fancy sketched

his victim, abandoned to strange—perhaps barbarous keeping, yet guarded by a watchful Providence, and waiting but the call of opportunity to retrieve the full measure of her rights. “Be it mine,” was my conclusion, “to clear her path for doing so, and bring deliverance to the castaway.”

True to my appointment, I met my father-in-law next morning at the vicarage, and found his purpose was to take the examination of an old woman, whose knowledge was likely to be useful to us.

France Jeffray, the individual in question, had been nurse to Lord Ardcapell’s infant daughter in London, and it was now our object to obtain a minute description (such as mothers and nurses alone can give) of her lost child. Meeting her in the garden, we retired to an adjacent summer house, and there, pencil in hand, Dalham took down her deposition, to assist which he even made a sketch of a child’s figure, and caused the old woman with her own hand to note down what pecu-

liar marks she might remember in the right place. "Well, I mind that," said she, as she dotted down a mole on the neck, "and here was another on the top of the right shoulder, aye, and abune a' there was one here, (placing the pencil a little below the instep of the left foot) that I could tell her by 'mang a' the countless babbies o' creation; it was a red spot as cum' wi' her into the world, of the color of a cherry, and shape of a pear, tho' not much bigger than a hazel nut. But eh, sirs! what for is't ye ask such unsensy questions? The poor lassie has been in heaven I trow this many a year."

Dalham parried this query with the professional tact so useful for the purpose, and we then proceeded to the house, where after a long interview with Mr. Felton (who was a magistrate) a fair copy was made of the old nurse's deposition, and duly signed by her in our presence.

The essential portion of it I transcribed into my pocket book.

This matter being despatched, my next object was to procure some useful auxiliary in the rough and hazardous mission I had undertaken, and as I wended my way to the Inn, I vainly racked my brains to discover a likely instrument. As thus pondering, I passed the bridge where we had been jeopardized the day before, by the waggoner's carelessness, whom should I see seated on its parapet but the peccant individual himself. He was whistling vacantly, with his hands in his pockets, and had the half dogged, half-listless mien of one whose "occupation was gone" against his will. His countenance, nevertheless, seemed naturally of a good-humoured cast; he had a clear, well-opened eye, and a bodily frame, which though yet youthful, gave promise both of activity and strength. His alertness I had already witnessed. As far as outside went I thought I might meet with many a more unlikely subject than the present, and to judge how far the inside might conform, and the whole be made subservient

to my plans, I determined to sound him by a few questions.

"Well, my lad," quoth I, "you had nearly got us into a hobble here yesterday; if you had been a trifle less handy with your whip I fear some of us would have rued it dearly?"

"Whoy, as far as that goes, maister, there's ane on us *has* rued it already."

"And who is that?" quo' I.

"Jeremiah Hood," quo he.

"And who may Jeremiah Hood be?"

"Mysel'."

"Have you rued it, my boy, how so?"

"Whoy, ye see t' tie thong o' t' wheelers brast wi' pullin' on't, and maister got mad at me for breakin it, and laid t' leather about my lugs, so I kittled hisn wi't whup, and then a' gied me notice to gang, and I 'een tuk un at 's word and here I be."

"Can you fire a gun off, and hit your mark when you do so?"

"Joe Blayfield 'll happen tell ye sae," replied he, with a cunning grin.

"What you've been taking shots at his game, eh? well, but you may be an honest fellow for all that; now I suppose you are on the look out for a new place; what say you to taking service with me?"

"Are you a hoffer, maister?"

"No, but you may have some warm work to go through notwithstanding, though not more than will fall to my own share."

"Well, that sounds fair, so I's 'een willin' to take on wi' ye; an ye be fair I'll be faithfu', and wi' regard to work, syne work one must, I'm one o' them wad liever have it hot than heavy?"

"Bravely said, my lad, then here's some gold for you, go and get a new rig out at — and join me again at the Leighton Arms, this evening. But harkee, Hood, you must drop the Jeremiah for the nonce, and stand in my books as Robin."

My scheme of passing a holiday week at Leighton being broken up by the incidents before related, and all business despatched

that might facilitate my further operations, I remained but until the Earl returned the borrowed portrait, and having confided my daughter during my absence to the careful keeping of her grandfather, proceeded on my return homewards.

CHAPTER V.

WITHIN the week after my leaving Leighton I found myself, accompanied by my newly enlisted henchman, Robin, and a young bloodhound, by name Bran—nephew (as solemnly avouched by Blayfield) of the superannuated Norman, “once more upon the waters,” passenger in the swift-sailing schooner “Swallow,” bound for St. John’s, New Brunswick. There was every prospect of her making a speedy passage, the vessel being clipper built, and selected from a multitude I had myself examined, entirely on that account; my great object being to gain what time I

could in the voyage, that I might have so much the more to spare for my long pilgrimage on "terra firma."

It was with altogether different feelings that I now ploughed the brine from those experienced in my last outward bound voyage. The future was no longer seen through the golden haze of hope, or gay kaleidoscope of fancy—the heart no longer flushed with boyish dreams of bliss, or visionary projects of adventure. In the twelve years that had passed since then, my castles in the air had fallen before the hard realities of life, and, my views chastened by experience, I now entered on the work I had in hand, with that sober earnestness of mind which is at once the best voucher for success, and the easiest condition for achieving it.

It was while leaning against the taffrail one evening after a day of unusual calm, watching the heaving of the waters against the strip of light that skirted the western sky, that these and kindred reflections crossed my

mind, nor was it without something of regret I contrasted my "day" and "yesterday," the monotonous tranquillity of the former, with the vivid pulsations of the last. There are certain seasons and frames of mind when the *laudatio temporis acti* is more than usually operant with us, giving a factitious blazon to past events, and an equally false shadowing to the present.

This I suppose was one of them. It is possible also the train of my meditations might have caught something of the sombre colouring that pervaded external nature, and as the gloom of the hour increased, they were suddenly and perhaps salutarily put to flight by the Captain coming upon deck and calling out to the mate, in those sharp, decisive tones that bespeak emergency, "We must strike top-masts, Amos; it's coming on to blow; the glass is going down like the deep sea lead."

In obedience to their chief's commands, the men sprang forwards to their work with professional alacrity, and amidst the gather-

ing darkness used their best efforts to make the ship snug against the expected peril.

Being myself but an idler aboard, I withdrew out of their way, and lighting a second cigar remained astern, watching their agile movements and listening to the dull wash of the water against the vessel's sides, as, scarcely impelled along, it surrendered itself with flapping sails and creaking masts to the languid heavings of the ocean.

The ear, filled to satiety with the monotonous sounds, listened cravingly for some break in the brooding silence they seemed to deepen, and readily recognized in a hoarse and distant roar that at length reached it, the annunciation of the coming gale.

The Captain caught the sound almost at the same moment, and immediately ordered the crew who were engaged in battening down the hatches to take in the little canvas that was yet unfurled.

Whilst hurrying to their urgent task, the washy roar was heard rapidly nearing, and

ere they could secure the belated sheet to its spar, the blast broke furiously upon us, and saved them the trouble of doing so by blowing every stitch out of the bolt-ropes.

The schooner reeled under the sudden shock till the water came pouring over her lee bulwarks, and had not the cargo been stowed with unusual care the juncture would have been one of no little peril ; being, however, snugly packed, the little craft immediately recovered herself, and commenced her rushing march over the seas that had already risen up around her.

Whilst pitching and bounding like a good sea boat as she was, before the furious and mounting blast, the mind could not fail to be impressed with the deep solemnity of the moment, as the mighty waves rolled by into the distance and the thick darkness that had suddenly come on, broken only by the little light in the binnacle, by paralyzing the power of sight enhanced the sensation of our helplessness.

To ensure efficient steerage (any interruption of which would instantly have laid us on our beam ends) four men were kept constantly at the wheel, and though seas were shipped from time to time, the vessel bravely held her way without mishap till near midnight, when a light became visible on the horizon.

Considering the latitude we were in, there could be little doubt it was a ship on fire, and as our own drew near (for we were scudding, and it lay directly to leeward) we discovered it to be a large barque, with its masts, rigging, and greater part of its hull one sheet of flame. It yet appeared to be under steerage way, the quarter-deck, crowded with people, being still kept to windward.

As heaving and falling with the wreck that fed it, the fire cast its lurid glow upon the scene, our fears for our own safety became momentarily lost in the contemplation of a doom so much more dreadful.

From the number of souls on board, it was evidently an emigrant ship, and the stern was

now seen thronged with these unhappy beings, already scorched by the approaching flames, and indebted, probably, to the virtue of some self-devoted helmsman for the short respite yet left them from destruction. Here, I say, they were gathered, the entire ship's company, agitated by every form of terror and despair known to the human breast. Here might be seen the attitude of prayer, gestures of ruffian violence, of unreasoning frenzy; for a moment even their mingled exclamations reached the ear, blending with the roaring of the wind and hissing of the water, as it dashed over the bulwarks on to the burning decks.

Extreme as was their strait, and harrowing as was the spectacle, we were unable, alas! to stir a finger for their relief. From the overpowering violence of the gale, it would have been impossible to round to, or get alongside, and could we even have done so, the volume of flame that wrapped the fated barque would inevitably have involved us in the same doom. All our boats, moreover, had been swept

away save one only, which was badly stove by floating spars, and those of the burning craft (taken, probably, by selfish fugitives) seemed also wanting.

As we passed like a phantom athwart her stern, three only of that wretched throng seemed to catch a momentary glimpse of us.

They were three women, who had clambered to the furthest foothold from the fire, and thence, desperate of human aid, appeared preparing to commit themselves to the less terrible of the two elements that threatened them. One held a child in her arm with maternal tenacity, whilst with the other she clung to one of the taffrail stanchions, thinking, perhaps, in that supreme moment, of her distant home and parted friends, which the appearance of our passing barque would yield a momentary hope of yet seeing again. The vivid cry of expectation, and wail of despair that followed it, with the attitude and anguish of the sufferer, haunted my memory for years after.

Wafted almost as soon as seen from this scene of agony we pursued our plunging course over the deep, the darkness that had for the moment been dispelled by the burning ship again enclosing us, and the fierce roar of the elements broken only by the crashing of some unstayed spar, or hollow noise of the water tumbling on our decks, until a little before morning, when a sharp, shrieking cry told us of one our seamen had been carried overboard by a tremendous sea that swept us from stem to stern.

The brief notice of his fate as it reached us thro' the hurly-burly of the storm and pitchy darkness, added not a little to the plenteous horrors of the scene.

At length the long craved-for light of morning began to show itself, and as it strengthened, the gale to show some symptoms of abating. Gradually the outlines of our rigging became visible, and sad indeed was the picture of ruin it presented. Our main mast had been snapped in two at the cross

trees, the mizen, gone by the board, and they now lay over the lee bulwarks impeding the steerage of the vessel and beating with hurtful violence against its sides.

The crew were immediately set to work with hatchets to clear away this obstruction, and whilst the captain was engaged in directing them, the mate came up to him with the alarming information that we had sprung a leak and already showed four feet water in the hold. As many hands as we could muster were now therefore transferred to the pumps, myself taking my turn among the rest, and we continued our exhausting labours till near noon, when it was found they were all being thrown away, and the water was slowly but steadily gaining upon us in spite of them.

The ship's fate, therefore, was decided; nor did our own seem less so, unless we could succeed in quitting her during the short interval allowed us. Our stove boat was the only means that presented itself of effecting this. It happened to be the long boat,

capable, had it been sound, of carrying the whole ship's company, but at present, as ill-luck would have it, in the most unseaworthy condition possible. However, the carpenter was set to work to make the best he could of so unpromising a job, and by dint of strenuous labour, and the effective help of two able hands among the crew, who had been fortunately bred to the same calling, it was in no great length of time patched, plugged, and fitted up so as to be thought capable of temporarily serving the purpose it was needed for.

Scarcely was this accomplished when the pumps were reported choked, and the ship to be showing signs of settling down by the head. There was, therefore, not a moment to be lost in despatching what was needful to be done ere quitting her.

Whilst the crew were using their best exertions to get the boat afloat, I hastened into the cabin, secured my bills, money, and what other valuables I had of a portable nature,

and thrusting a pistol into my belt, and giving another to Robin, reached the deck just in time to see our all-important long-boat successfully hoisted overboard, when it was safely swung round under our lee, and secured there by a strong hawser.

A barrel of biscuit and one of water were then hurriedly lowered down into it, the men (who had been unable to get into the fore-cabin for their kits) dropped one by one into their places, and after Robin and myself had followed their example, the skipper, who from a sense of duty was last to leave his vessel, descended also, shouting out sharply as he did so to cast off the tow-rope, as he believed she was on the point of going down. In this he was not mistaken, for scarce had we shoved the boat twice its own length from her stern, when, after giving two or three gulping lurches, the ill-fated craft sank down before our eyes, in the element she had so late breasted in her pride.

The sea was yet high, though the gale had

nearly ceased, and tried our cranky craft severely, but getting up a makeshift sail we set our course due west, hoping to fall in with some vessel ere our small store of provision should be consumed.

A little before sunset, as we were labouring along over the heavy swells, examining the ocean with anxious eyes, I discerned some object floating in relief against the bright sky ahead, which as we neared it I made out to be a hen-coop or some similar piece of lumber swept from a ship's deck, conveying a tale of storm or shipwreck. But this was not all; on this piece of lumber I beheld some object floating, which I scarce knew wherefore, aroused my interest; it might be a human creature, and as we were about to pass it some few points abeam, I requested the helmsman to steer in the direction that we might satisfy our doubts upon the matter. He was one of those unfortunately constituted beings, whose nature becomes "gnarled" by the crossings of adversity, and it was not without some

difficulty, and even a threat of resorting to my "shooting iron," that I succeeded in overcoming his perverseness, when, keeping near him to guard against evasion, I directed Robin to stand by and haul in the unknown object as soon as we should get alongside. This he cleverly effected, and presently increased our boat's company by a fine little boy about five years old, insensible, though still living, and clutching with drowning tenacity in his little hands fragments of the wicker-work that had been the immediate means of his preservation.

By dint of assiduous nursing, signs of returning consciousness ere long appeared, and at length he became able to inform us of what little he knew about himself. As far as we could gather from his broken parlance, he was the son of a Dorsetshire labourer, and with his parents and brothers and sisters, made part of the ill-starred freight of the emigrant ship. He told us that when the flames had no longer left them any foothold, his mother had jumped with him into the water, when in

his drowning struggles he had caught hold of the floating hen-coop, and clung thereto till rescued, the only one it was to be feared of the whole ship's company.

Robin and myself gladly gave the little fellow a share of our scanty rations, and then wrapping him up in a pea-coat, made him comparatively snug for the night.

The weather having now become almost calm, and the sea much gone down, we carried on under our lug-sail during the night, getting snatches of sleep as we sat, and ardently hoping that the morrow might bring some sail to take us up.

As soon as the morning light enabled us to scan the prospect, a seaman in the bow made the joyful discovery of a sail being in sight. Each dejected countenance now cleared up, and the further fact, scarcely less important, of its having sighted us was presently placed beyond a doubt by the reverberations of a gun reaching us over the heaving main. We soon beheld her bearing down towards us,

and as on our own part we had tacked about to fetch her, no long time elapsed ere we found ourselves under the yards of a fine Whitehaven brig, the captain of which received us with rough cordiality, and being bound to St. Johns as well as ourselves, made no difficulty in giving us a passage thither.

The remainder of our voyage was performed in safety, and we reached the port of our destination without further incident worth notice, on the morning of the twenty-fifth of June.

It may be remembered that in my former voyage I disembarked at Halifax, and reached St. Johns by crossing the Nova Scotian peninsula, a trip which, though found very agreeable at that period, was now from stress of time very willingly dispensed with.

The poor boy whom we had saved I placed in charge of a presbyterian minister of the place, who was known to the Captain, with my best hope that a life so specially

preserved by Providence would be blessed by a continuation of its mercies.

After equipping ourselves almost anew (a matter rendered necessary by our late losses from shipwreck) we now took boat up the St. Johns, following the route of my former journey, and remarking with satisfaction the advance made by the province in population and culture since that period.

Robin was vastly struck with the immeasurable woods he saw on every side, and whilst gazing on the novel scenery we passed through, I thought I could discover in his countenance something of the sensations I had myself experienced when at nearly about his age I traversed it for the first time.

On the evening of the third day we began to approach the scene of my old colonial sojourn, and hastened our pace to reach it ere night should put new difficulties in our way. We were yet, however, some miles distant when the sun set, and but for the aid of certain land-marks that I still bore in re-

collection, should have found it no easy task to master the short distance that remained.

There was now no moon up to illuminate its beauties, as on my first well-remembered advent to the spot, but the myriad planets already marshalled in the heavens, afforded a dubious light that partially helped our steps; and at length, ere we were well aware of its propinquity, disclosed at our feet, by their reflection on its surface, the lovely water of Loch Furness.

Our old habitation being on the further side, we had still a space of half a mile to go ere reaching it, and I now for the first time began to entertain misgivings that after all our trouble in getting there, we might possibly find it demolished or untenanted.

As I probed my way in its direction, my mind began involuntarily to revert to the incidents and imagery of the former life I had spent there. The daily sunrise and sunset, our goings forth and comings in, our hours of toil afield, and recreation at home or on the

island, the bracing excitement of our hunting bouts, the wanderings in the woods, and events connected with the romantic episode which had again brought me hither, all came rife crowding upon my mind, and whilst darkness beset my outward path, gladdening the inner sense with a sunshine they were yet able to reflect.

“And yonder,” I soliloquized, as the peninsula on which it was situate became dimly visible over the water, “yonder is Lindale Cote, and here—aye, here it was I hailed it as my destined Eden, where I could willingly have abode for life. Ah! *cæca mens mortaliū*! there it still remains, perchance unchanged, but how is it with its would-be life-long denizen? But fourteen months had passed, and that Arcadian dream was at an end; of those that have succeeded it how few have better justified their promise, the brightest being first to fade, till sickened with the sterile retrospect, he resolves to dream no

more, or, should the fond habit be incurable, find some other subject for its exercise."

"Now, Jonathan, be spry, the brush'll be all burnt out before we start."

Such was the exclamation that, uttered in no very patient tone, and at no great distance from us, put an abrupt estoppel to my reverie.

The voice I fancied that I recognised, and accordingly advanced a few steps towards it, to see if my conjecture should be verified. Again it broke forth from the outward darkness—

"Jonathan! hey, Jonathan! (no answer) loafed to the liquor store, I'll warrant. Jonathan, I say! ain't he a pet now to go spearin' with. Why, Jonathan!"

"Verily," muttered I to myself, "you must be either King David or Bryce Jannock?"

I now discovered a canoe just under the shore, with a glimmering fire at one end, and by its light, the outline of a sturdy figure, wielding a fishing spear and giving utterance

to his impatience in appeals, such as the foregoing. I had no doubt it was my trusty old associate aforesaid, as this used to be one of his favorite occupations, so whispering Robin to remain where he was, and putting on my over-coat, which in the heat of walking I had doffed, I went up without further ado to where the exclaimant stood, and quietly took my seat at the vacant end of the little craft.

“Softly, softly, Jonathan ! softly, old coon !” cried Jannock, as the frail barque dipped beneath my weight, “or you’ll be punchin’ a hole in her bottom and making her as groggy as yourself. Darn it, man, don’t ye see ye’re a settin on my line ?”

It was evident Bryce was in no very blessed humour this particular evening, but desirous for the moment of avoiding recognition, I released his line without reply, and seized the paddle to perform what was expected as my own share of the duty.

“We’ll make for the old ground I reckon, under the rock ; there’s been a power o’ fish

there o' late, and this is a first rate night for skewerin' em."

I accordingly paddled away towards where he had signified, and knowing the ground full well, soon brought up at the scene of our intended operations. Bryce freshened the fire with a handful of brush, and poising his fishing spear, bent intently over the side to strike his prey. "Here they are tag-rag and bobtail—massy, what a shoal! Now be smart, Jonathan, my tulip, and we'll just get the pick o' the lot—softly, softly, though—edge away a bit to the left—lud, here's a screamer! so, another stroke!" Away shot the fishing spear, and away shot the fish, uninjured. "Why, Jonathan, what on 'arth was you a drivin' at; blest if you ha'n't cleared the whull drove; back man and let's get the spe'r up—was you agoin' to run the island down, Jonathan? There, that'll do, now softly, so ludamighty what a stunner; now mind your stroke, old coon, and we'll broach him cleverly—left, left!"

I accordingly gave a stroke on the left side, which produced a result apparently the reverse of that desired.

"My stars!" exclaimed Bryce, turning round and appealing to creation in general, "if he hasn't sent us clean ajee again—dod rot it, man, didn't ye hear me cry left? Why, i' the name of Beelzebub—soft tho'—here comes another, a twenty-pounder too, if an ounce—lud's sake now, Jonathan, keep your eyes skinned, do, and mind the word—right! right!"

And away flew the spear once more, as I gave another desperate stroke under the same malign influence as before. The fish again was missed, and the spearman nearly capsized in attempting to recover his weapon.

"Death and tarnation! well if this don't—now Jonathan what devil was't made ye do that? thunner and lightnin man! didn't ye hear me sing out 'right' and hear ye go like an idjet as y'are ashovin' the boat to Canady; the spe'r's gone too! now Jonathan I see how it is—

you've been at your old tricks again, for as early as 'tis—I wish these liquor shops were i' h—ll fire, and their owners brandered atop of 'em; there's not been a sober chap i' the settlement syn' Phil Rys'le was here;—settlement indeed! ahs me! if he had only been here, to ha' seen our goin's on—back man, and let's get the tool up anyhow—gor' darn it, back! ha, wasn't that a rock we touched on? aye, here's water in the boat—now if ever I go afloat agin with such a born goney, such a consarned, confounded, dod-rotted dunderhead—well, it's all up for this bout, you may paddle hum now frind, and welcome," finished Bryce, winding the line with a savage resignation round the spear he had at length regained, "if we've done nothing else, we've spiled as good a boat as ever swum, and skeered the fish from the spot for a month to come."

Whilst I paddled away towards the well-known dwelling as well as my secret laughter would allow, a repeated hail was

heard from that part of the shore where we had embarked.

“Eh! Bryce, Bryce, says ‘a,” quo’ the splenetic spearsman imitating the summons, “who the divel can you be, frind? if you hadn’t bin here a spi’lin my sport all this while, I would ha’ sworn that was you a hollerin’ Jonathan; well, shout away frind, whoever you be, here’s Bryce at your sarvice.”

Again and again came the clamorous summons, and still Jannock listened to it in obdurate but evidently regardful silence; at length he abruptly broke out:—

“Massy, Jonathan, if that ain’t you, it must be your double—can’t you open your mouth man an speak, ’stead of sittin’ there like a floatin’ bogle. I think we’re all bewitched to night (no answer); Jonathan, d’ye hear me, is that you or not I say, Jonathan?”

There was something so ludicrous in the question, as well as nascent tone of alarm in which it was uttered, that I could suppress

my mirth no longer, nor get out any other words by way of reply than a broken "aye, aye, Bryce."

Bryce now began to smell a rat.

"Aye, aye! hullo, what bedfellow have I got now?"

He then remained perfectly silent till we touched the shore under the old Cote, when suddenly kindling a handful of brush he had prepared for the purpose, he held it close up to my face. His own underwent a rapid transition from ill-humour to wonderment, and from wonderment to gratification, as throwing Truegroove on his left arm, and wringing my hand like a very vice, he exclaimed:—

"Eh what! why it ain't—massy, it is Phil Ry'sle as sure as shootin'."

"Phil Ruysdale, sure enough," returned I demurely, "but methinks you've given him but a scurvy sort of welcome."

"Wull, that's a fact," quo Bryce, laughing as he recalled his late objurgations, "there

ain't no denyin' it; but who would ha' dreamed it was you 'playin' possum' by starlight, and bedevillin' the boat arter that fashion; how heavy too you stepped into it, squire; you'll have more beef on your bones than you had onst, I'm thinkin'. Wull, I knowed you'd be harkin' back to the old spot some o' these days, tho' I've well nigh gone under in waitin' for it. Hark (hearing Robin call) ain't that Master • Butternut? swouns! who would ha' thought o' this! I'll away and fetch him over; is he as full o' book notions as he used to be?" asked Bryce with his dry laugh, "and as fond o' peltry? Ahs me!" sighed he, as he threw the relics of his fire into the lake and paddled off. "He'll find no more skinnin' in these parts, I reckon."

CHAPTER VI.

HAVING groped my way through the neglected grounds to our old habitation, I sat down awhile at the outside to await the coming up of my companions.

Ere long Jannock returned, accompanied by Robin only, the vociferous Jonathan having been denied passage on the ground of inebriety, and I presently heard the former piloting his new guest towards his abode. "Hie ye in, lad; hie ye in while I tie up the boat; it's only a hunter's shanty, but it has seen many a merry splore in its time; we'll soon raise a low on the hearth, and find a snack o' vittle

for wer inwards. That critter Jonathan's mislaid the pad—heigh-ho ! that ever I should ha' lived to see padlocks wanted in the wilderness !”

Thus guiding, welcoming, and grumbling, the hunter rejoined us in the old familiar chamber where we had of yore listened to so many of his “yarns,” and which lit up by the fire I had resuscitated seemed still haunted by the blythe memories and thronging associations of by-gone times.

As he busied himself with the preparations for our meal, I observed him glancing frequently at our friend Robin, who was sitting demurely in the corner, eyeing with divided interest the weather-beaten figure of his host and the culinary operations he was engaged in. “Wull, squire,” said Jannock, as we sat down to some venison steaks he at length placed on the table, “you’ve been an almighty long time in turning up, that’s a fact; I began to think you was gone under for good, and

that the time had come for the old man to up trap and absquatalate."

"Absquatalate, Bryce! what, from the once well-beloved shores of Loch Furness?"

"Aye," returned he, austerely, "and shake off the dust of my moccasins agin the sacrilegious raff as is come to o'errun it in these latter days. Englishers, Dutchers, Irishers, drunkards, loafers, lumberers, thieves; grog-shops here—watermills there—roguery everywhere—noise, no end on. Heaven and 'arth knows what I've had to stand among 'em, waiting for you this twelve year gone and more; axes dinning in my ears all day long; game skeered off wi' whirly wheels; fish p'isoned wi' saw-dust, and every now and then some skunk of a lawyer coming up and axing me what I would take for my location. 'My sarvice to you, frind,' says I; 'air you a wantin' on it now, or do you mind waitin' till you get it?' there ain't no carrying on with it no longer, so I'm tip-top chipper

you've come back, squire—better late than never—to look arter your gear, and keep it from falling into the hands of the Philistines.”

This was by no means an inviting picture of my ci-devant Eden, but I made large allowance for the colouring given to it by the old woodsman's prejudices and pursuits.

“It has fairly made an old man of me,” he continued, “so I e'en think of turning my back on the blackguards and sloping nor'rards, where I can sight Truegroove on a deer now and then, and 'arn and eat my vittles in peace.”

“A very natural resolve under the circumstances, but I've other work in hand for you, old boy, and other game afoot; have you been at the Far Pines of late?”

“Far Pines! aye, there's a new settler there now, and he calls the spot Petersville; Peter's folly, say I, for he has made a rare fool's nest on't; the game has become so scarce I had to stretch as far as there to drop this deer we're a eatin'.”

"Well, and do you remember a certain young fawn we were once engaged in hunting up at that same spot?"

"Du' I remember it? du' I not? I've so'thing to tell ye about that bit of venison. I onst thought of coming over to you in the old country about the business, but I didn't know where you was, and I didn't hear nothing tell of you, so I just wrote a bit of a letter instead, which may be never got to hand."

"It certainly never got to mine, which I much regret; how was the letter directed?"

"'Squire Ry'sle, th' old country,' I some think."

Which readily accounts for the circumstance, thought I. "Well, we'll talk over the matter to-morrow (I did not wish to admit Robin too far into our secrets at this early stage); now tell me how it has fared with you since we parted that fine morning under the beech tree."

"Why, arter you and Master Butternut had

gone, (well, I should ha' been glad to ha' seen him here again) I was rayther hard bested at times by gangs o' these onpeaceable Yankees as came down upon the Cote; one time with our old frind Master Lane at their head, seeking to play off some of his old shines; but I soon found the way to content 'em. Whenever the varmint showed their thievish mugs, I pulled off in the canoe to the island and peppered away with old Truegroove at every mother's son that showed face, foot, or posteerum. Arter barkin' Hag-gai and two or three more o' the riptyles, they got tired o' the entertainment at last, and sheered off, arter settin' fire to the old logs, which I got back in time to put out.

"So then the peace came, and a pleasant and quiet time I had on't for years, gettin' game to my heart's content and peltry too, till these skunks o' settlers showed their dirty faces and druv the game away, and the peltry and contentment along with it. Syne then," concluded the old woodsman, with a sigh,

“my life has been little else, as I may ca’ it, than vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Having finished his brief recital, he turned to Robin (who during his discourse had been closely examining Truegroove), and after complacently regarding him and his employment for some minutes, observed to me with an air of satisfaction :

“Clever-looking younker, that—different brand from Master Butternut, I’m thinkin’ ; but—”

Here he took a hemlock sprout from the floor, and manipulated it significantly with his fingers.

“Green, you would say, Bryce—something green and inexperienced—it may be so ; but practice will amend that ; the stoutest tree in the forest was a sapling once.”

“And that’s true, too.”

“If you consent to join our enterprize, we shall all of us, I suspect, earn some additional wrinkles in our horns before we’ve done ; in the meantime, as we’ve had rather a hard

day's work of it, and look for a good many more to come, you will excuse us if we now ask the way to our sleeping berths."

Our trusty host soon prepared us a couple of shakedown, and happy in having so far made good our way, and gratified, on my own part, despite the Jeremiads I had heard, to find my property in a condition that promised well for my interests, we laid ourselves down in contentment, and enjoyed a sound and well-earned rest.

The next day, leaving Robin to amuse himself for a few hours as he best liked, Jan-nock and I paddled out into the lake, when I informed him of the object of my visit, and excited his great astonishment at the disclosures I had to make to him in connection with it.

He willingly tendered me his services, and we then laid our heads together to devise the best means of commencing our important work.

The communication he had had to make to

me the night before, was simply that during a moment of boon companionship, he had been informed by the landlord of the woodland tavern (Mike Leary), who had overheard the discussions of the plotters, that the missing child we were in search of had, instead of perishing in the fire, been kidnapped and carried away to some remote part of the West, which he professed to be further ignorant of, and that he believed this was done with the privity, if not at the instigation of the English stranger who had heretofore been his lodger.

This, though satisfactory in confirming the conclusions we had already come to, gave us but indifferent light for making our first throw off. I pressed Jannock to turn the matter carefully over in his mind, whilst I went on a tour of inspection through my property, and give me the results of his deliberation in the evening.

At that time he entered again upon the subject, told me he had revolved the matter

to the best of his ability, but was really unable to recommend one plan more than another, unless I thought the following suggestion worthy of consideration.

Leary and, as he believed, Lane, being both dead, the Indians (Toby and Ruth) disappeared, he knew not whither; and his old comrade, Steve Wiley, being the only one of those concerned in the abduction who was known to him, and on whom, therefore, could be founded any hope of assistance, we might endeavour to trace him out, and by gratifying his well-known passion for money, obtain the information so essential to us. This he thought was possible from its being within his knowledge that Wiley had a mother living in Kentucky, whom he was in the habit of visiting on his return from his trapping expeditions, and who, if it should be thought worth while to make so long a journey to consult her, might give us information as to his whereabouts.

We might take this, suggested Jannock, for

our first move, as it offered a chance at least of making a right start, and was therefore better than remaining idle, or being left to grope our way in the dark.

In this view I concurred, and having adopted it as the first portion of our plan of campaign, we allowed no needless delay to interfere with its execution.

One day more I devoted to giving the necessary instructions to a lawyer for the disposal of my property in the neighbourhood, and the following one found Jannock, Robin and myself on the road, diligently pursuing our way southwards.

Considering the vast distance to be traversed we thought we had made good progress, when towards the end of the third week of our journey, we were wearily completing its last stage.

We had entered Kentucky in the morning, and during the course of the day had abundant occasion to admire the varied and beautiful features of that favoured state—the

undying charms of its natural scenery, the wide yellow tracts of Indian corn, waving in full harvest promise over the "bloody ground," and the fine specimens of domestic animals which every now and then met our view, shewing the superior "mettle of their pasture."

By observations such as these, and conversation they gave rise to, we beguiled the tedium of travel as best we might, and late in the afternoon, having regaled ourselves with some excellent cyder at a rustic tavern on the road, found ourselves descending the long hill, down which winds the highway leading to the small but picturesque village of Coonsville.

The sun had just set over the opposite heights, and we were about putting our horses to a trot, that we might save what remained of the short twilight, when a sharp-featured, shrewish looking woman ran out of a loghouse at the road side, and going up to

Jannock, who was nearest her, requested him, with an earnest air, to call as we passed through the village, on one Nathaniel Crane, a respectable inhabitant of the place.

"Poor Steve—that's my son," said she, "he's taken mighty bad this arternoon, and nothing 'll content him, but gettin' some decent body to come and talk with him. Now Nathaniel, ye see, had him in hand when he was a youngster, and him and Steve seemed al'ays to cotton 'til each other, and now he thinks he's like to die he wants to see the old friend as taught him all the good he ever got, and would ha' put him into a better way than may be he has chanced to follow, poor feller."

We of course agreed to her request, when, looking steadily at me, she observed—

"I think, sir, you're an Englisher—if I be right, will ye step into the shanty awhile, and speak with my poor agoin' son; he has just now been saying to me, he would give all he had

in the world for three minutes' speech with some honest Englisher. But," she added, "ye must'nt set too much store, mind, by what Steve tells ye, for he has never been his right man syn' he caught this ugly Western fever, and to-night he's more flightsome far than ever."

The old woman's manner, which showed her feelings were concerned, no less than the import of her speech, raised my curiosity, and induced me to comply with her desire, so after despatching Robin on her errand I alighted from my jaded horse, and followed her into her humble dwelling.

Preceding me on tiptoe, she softly opened the door of a rude, rough-planked chamber, and there, on a low pallet, with his face turned towards a little window that let in the fading glow of the sunset, lay the individual who had expressed the singular wish to see some honest Englishman.

His appearance, together with that of his

bed-gear, which, though clean, was greatly tossed and rumpled, indicated the distraction and restlessness of fever.

Surely I have seen that face before, thought I, and half-audibly muttered.

"Aye," echoed a low, deep voice at my elbow, "there lies Steve Wiley, as sure as here stands Bryce Jannock; pray God, we're not too late."

"Bryce Jannock! Is that Bryce Jannock?"

"Aye, here he is, Steve. D'ye remember the scrimmage we had with the Raphoes, old hoss, and Mike Leary's, and Haggai Lane, and the fire in the woods that time the English lord was burnt?"

The sick man gasped as this was spoken, turned his face to his pillow, and after a short silence, during which he seemed to be gathering strength to speak, muttered in a low and broken voice, "Oh, Bryce, I'm making tracks for the next world; that was a bad

business ; whenever I think on't it downs me like walking over a burnt prairie. You're sartain he died, then ?”

“ Sartain ; I helped to bury him with my own hands.”

“ Well, I al'ays thought it was so ; but o' late, in my lonesome hours, he has time and agin appeared afore me ; only a while syne I see him there, where that gentleman's a standin, and he asked me for his child. Many's the red Injyns I've shot down in my trapping bouts, and thought no more on it than dropping so many chitmunks ; but this burning and kidnapping Christi'n men and gals, heaven and 'arth seems to cry out in judgment agin it.”

“ Kidnapped, did ye say, Steve ? what, was the young gal then kidnapped ?”

“ Aye, kidnapped she was ; the father was burned, and the child was kidnapped. It cries agin me day and night, and 'll let me have no rest till it comes out. She was

carried away at a stranger's bidding, for gold. I never rightly knew the secrets o' the matter, but I suspicion he craved her wealth. He gave us gold by handful—I'll tell the truth—a dollar each we got for every mile we took her, and now it's all lying here (placing his hand on his heart, and sighing deeply) heavier—heavier than the 'Three Tetons.'"

His mother now went up to his bed-side, and said in his ear :

"Steve, there's an English gentleman here; you wanted to see one, you know, just now."

The sick man turned his eyes upwards, as though in mute thanksgiving at the circumstance, muttering to himself the while, "the matter may be mended yet then;" and addressing me in a voice scarcely audible, he said :

"Draw nigh, sir, for my wind is worsening fast. When you go back to the old country, seek out the friends of the settler as—as—Bryce there knows who I mean."

"Aye, aye; go on, Steve; we know."

"Tell them, tho' the father be dead, the child is living —"

"Where?" I exclaimed, in the intensity of my interest.

"Softly, softly, squire," interposed Jan-nock; "let him take his own way, or we shall have him off the track altogether."

"Near where that devil Lane and his setter-on bestowed her, far away west, among the Blackfeet."

"Which breed o' Blackfeet, Steve? was it the praira or mountain niggers?"

"Wind river Injyns. I see her there myself last fall. Mightily grown she was, and as dark as a red-skin, but I knowed her; tell them, if they would heal their bleeding hearts, and give rest to the soul of a dying sinner, to seek her out, and bring her to her country and kin again."

Several anxious questions were then put to him, which he found himself unable to answer,

After a long interval, he faintly murmured, "Air, air; give me air, mother; I'm going."

The door of his chamber was accordingly thrown open, and at the same instant in walked the individual who had been summoned to converse with him, a tall, benevolent-looking man, with a somewhat demure cast of countenance, and behind him my messenger, Robin.

"How is he, Sarah?" asked the former, in a subdued tone; "any hope?"

"I'm afeard not; he says he's a-goin', and he looks like it; see how he's a pickin' the spread."

He then went up to his friend's bed-side, and said gently in his ear:

"Steve, I'm come; speak to me—speak to Nathaniel."

A faint "O, Nathaniel!" escaped with the parting breath of the dying trapper, and his features then gradually sunk into the tokenless vacuity of death.



Meditating deeply on this scene, as solemn and momentous as it was unexpected, I proceeded, after a decent interval with my two associates, to our hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

Our path seemed now much clearer, and our chief anxiety was to pursue it with as little delay as possible.

The revelations of the defunct trapper threw a fearful light upon the broken speeches I had formerly over-heard at the tavern, particularly that one which, puzzling me then, I had so often mused on since : " You shall have a dollar a-piece for every mile you take her."

They had carried her, it appeared, to the Rocky Mountains—a distance of two thousand miles, and assuming the compact to be fulfilled,

would have each therefore received a wage of as many dollars.

Considering the work it was received for, no wonder his wicked earnings lay so heavy on the conscience of the unhappy man whose remorseful end we had just witnessed.

Retribution had thus overtaken the two subordinate agents in the plot (for Lane had died in the course of a long imprisonment incurred by subsequent offences) and it now only remained to repair the evil they had occasioned, and bring their wicked principal to justice.

Leaving Coonsville the next morning, we proceeded as expeditiously as possible to St. Louis, where our party was to be organised, and equipments and stores provided for our long land journey.

Being the chief emporium of western traffic we found, on arriving there, no difficulty in procuring the various matters necessary for our purpose, and having abundant funds at my disposal, I determined to spare neither ex-

pense nor pains in giving the party an effective outfit.

Our first purchase was of strong leathern clothing (buck-skin hunting shirts, leggings, and moccasins) which might stand the wear and tear of a rough out-of-doors life for some twelve or eighteen months, it being for this purpose far more suitable than any textile fabric.

We then at a gunsmith's, whose wares bore a good reputation, procured two rifles for myself and Robin (Bryce still rejoiced in his inseparable Truegroove), of the long and heavy kind usual in the States, carrying balls of 60 to the pound, as also half-a-dozen long pistols (the barrels ten inches in length) capable of projecting a bullet with good effect at 50 yards.

The honest armourer informed us there had been considerable demand for his weapons of late in consequence of the disturbed state of the Indian country, though he feared, as to many of them, they were no better than

“ pearls thrown afore swine;” hoped, however, we should handle our “shootin’ ir’ns” to better purpose, and invited us to report on their merits in case we should ever come that way again. He then directed us to a respectable cutler’s, where we might furnish ourselves with trustworthy hunting knives. “A good deal of trash,” he remarked, “was vended under this name, but if you want a re’l slap-up whittle that ’ll sliver a bough, slice a buck, or scalp a redskin, there,” said he, pointing to the shop, “you’ll suit yourselves I guess, to a nicety.”

With respect to this article there is more judgment required in the choice than seems to be generally exercised.

Being wanted alike for purposes of wood craft, an arm of offence and defence, and the more humble uses of a whittle, it should be at once heavy enough to serve as bill or short sword—sharp enough to quarter a deer without mangling, and light enough to

be easily handled on occasion at the trencher on which that deer may be laid in the form of venison.

Those we chose by the advice of an old trapper, who happened to be in the shop at the time, were not more than a foot long in the blade, but nearly two inches in width, having but one edge till about two inches from the tip, where the back was slightly scolloped out, and the remainder to the point made equally sharp on both sides. Each might be a little more than a pound in weight; its temper of the best "bill" metal, not liable to snip, and requiring the occasional use of the whetstone.

Not being able to hear of any caravan immediately about to proceed in the direction we proposed for ourselves, and three making but a small force to dare the dangers of the Western Deserts, it was deemed advisable to augment it by enlisting a couple of stout well-experienced hunters, which, as celerity was to

be consulted as well as safety, we thought would make up with ourselves a sufficient number for ensuring both.

As fate however willed it, among the motley crowds then congregated at St. Louis, not even this small number of the precise sort of men we wanted—individuals to be depended on, who would not warp in the wear, were procurable—at least none to satisfy the fastidious taste of Jannock, who was charged with their selection, and entertained perhaps a just dread of clogging the movements of the party with what he called “lumber.”

Casually mentioning our difficulty to our acquaintance the gunsmith, he told me that if I would not mind waiting a few days, he thought he could supply me with the sort of men I wanted—two trapping friends of his own, at present serving in a fur brigade, which was expected shortly to arrive.

To this proposal I briefly objected the delay it would occasion, and he then suggested that as our intended route seemed to tally with

that taken by the returning traders, I might endeavour to meet and make my arrangements with them on the road.

This being apparently quite a feasible course, I decided on adopting it.

To carry provisions and other needful stores, I sought out and purchased a light covered waggon, small in the body, but with strong wheels and axles, in which I caused to be carefully stowed a precious cargo of flour, biscuits, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco (the latter the best medium of exchange in the Indian country), and ammunition, together with a small quantity of cured meat (for supplies of this in a fresh state we relied upon our rifles) to the tune of fifteen hundred-weight, which was thought not above what our team of six mules would be quite able to deal with.

If the reader should consider this a trifling load for a team of six, he will be pleased to remember they had to be their own road-makers as they drew it.

In regard to the mounting of the party, I

had for my own riding an exceedingly good little mare, which I had taken a fancy to and bought in my way through Kentucky—a darkisk chestnut, showing a good deal of blood; and having procured a couple of stout serviceable animals for Jannock and Robin, our little party found themselves fully appointed and equipped in every respect for their enterprize.

To drive the waggon, act as cook, and help us generally at the outset, I hired a Canadian half-breed, of the name of Antoine, who professed to have had much experience in his line, and whom we made conditions to dispense with at the end of a month, in case of either party so willing it.

It was on the fifth of August that the echoes of our teamster's whip resounding in the "liberal air," gave audible token of our having at length got fairly under way, all of us in the highest spirits, and little disposed to dwell on the prospective crosses and hard-

ships that inevitably await the far-western traveller.

Our mules, being imperfectly broken, gave us for the first few days a good deal of trouble, as new teams usually do, and long ere the day was spent two of the most refractory having broken their harness in two places, it was found necessary to halt in the midst of a wild plain in order to repair it.

Whilst thus employed Jannock called my attention to the appearance of the sky, which, hitherto bright and cloudless, began now to show a black haze along the horizon, swiftly ascending towards the zenith. There was a boding look about it that told the storm fiend was approaching, and about to carry it with a high hand.

"We must make snug," cried Bryce, "and that soon; yon clouds are travelling like a full-blown prairie fire."

"How awfully black they look!"

"Aye, black as gunpowder, and I guess they'll be giving it us arter the same fashion ;

we must make for yon hollow, and hobble the beasts, slick, or we shall have 'em stam-ped by the 'lightnin', and be left to drag our 'notions' ourselves."

Antoine having in some sort restored the gear, the waggon was driven to the place signified—a natural depression in the ground which might afford us some small shelter from the wind, and then all used their best efforts in securing the valuable animals on which we began more and more to feel our dependence.

On concluding this task we anxiously sought for any sign that might discover to us the quarter in which the storm would break.

Though an almost midnight darkness over-spread the heavens, no sound, not even a breath of wind was perceptible, and like ourselves, the unreasoning animals about us conscious of an impending crash, yet awed by the ominous hush, stood helplessly awaiting the catastrophe.

We were still lingering by the side of the waggon for the purpose of leading our three horses at a moment's notice under its lee-side as soon as we could discover which side that would be, when a thunder-clap that seemed to rend the very heavens broke over our heads, accompanied by a furious blast, which, coming as it seemed from every point of the compass at once, entirely defeated our kind purpose towards our dumb companions.

Too happy were we to find refuge ourselves under the tilt of the vehicle from the deluges of rain that in compact, sluicy sheets now descended, speedily inundating the plain around, and threatening even to swamp us bodily in the hollow where we had fled for refuge.

The stunning thunder, incessant lightning, and overwhelming watershed, exceeded all I had heretofore conceived of the power and sublimity of a land storm. Assailed as we were by it in the midst of a dreary waste, at the very outset of our expedition, it excited a

certain feeling of discouragement ; we were even disposed to regard it as an evil omen—to fancy the spirit of our arch-adversary rode the blast, and was marshalling the elements themselves to war against the champions of right.

Cowering beneath our frail awning, in fear every moment of getting a ride into the air on the top of our powder canisters, we sat smoking our pipes and blinking at the lightning for nearly a couple of hours, when the storm began to show symptoms of abating. The wind ceased by degrees, the gloomy pall that had overhung the sky thinned away, and the bright blue firmament at last, thronged with its golden monitors, came forth, stablishing a silent cheer within our breasts, and telling in celestial language that the tyranny of nature was overpast.

Though yet early in the evening it was too late to re-yoke our teams, so gathering and securing our scared quadrupeds round the waggon, we returned to its shelter, made out

a supper from our stores, and at length laid ourselves down to rest.

Early the next morning we proceeded on our way, our spirits toned anew by the delightful elasticity of the air and fresh beauty of the country, renovated by the late rains.

Examining it as we paced along, we were pleased to see on every side its abounding promise of fertility, and the thriving farms we now and then passed by, gave token this was far from being lost on the practical and energetic race that peopled it.

Missouri being a frontier state, its population possesses very much of that half-horse, half-alligator character, that constitutes the backwoodsman type. During this and the following days the different varieties we met of it in the shape of bee-hunters, stark-trappers, intending settlers, and rough independent farmers jogging along to fair or market, nearly all armed with the universal rifle, gave us ample opportunity of judging of the sons of the soil, and gratifying a curiosity I had

long felt to behold the Anglo-Saxon, severed from the parent stock, and in a new hemisphere, under the influence of these primitive conditions of life.

Laying our course towards the Kansas river we got along at the rate of about twenty miles a day, occasionally meeting with rivers which, though for the most part fordable, had often precipitous banks, which rendered a good deal of labour necessary to effect a practicable passage for the waggon.

Thus, seasoning ourselves by degrees for the more arduous stages of our journey, and having as yet encountered no peril and but little hardship, we at length reached the confines of the State and entered on the great Western wilderness.

So far nothing had been seen or heard of the fur-trading party from whom we expected to obtain our additional hands, and it was not without much uneasiness I found we were advancing into the prairies with so weak and (with one exception) inexperienced a force.

Waiting, however, would in no wise mend the matter, and as we had taken care to adhere to the route prescribed us, there yet remained a possibility of our falling in with them, so that "forward" was still the word, and forward we boldly fared.

Some few days after crossing the frontier I was riding, towards evening, with Jannock, a little ahead of the rest, my comrade looking about for a suitable spot to encamp in, and myself admiring the exquisite colouring of the western sky, as, stretched behind clumps of fir trees, it cast its tinted splendours over the wild steppe around, when on passing a grove of pines that had for some time served us as a land-mark, we suddenly beheld a bright fire blazing at a little distance on our front.

Halting awhile to allow the waggon to come up I carefully reconnoitred the object through my spy-glass.

The flame was flickering on the stems of a knot of fir trees about half a mile a-head, and we also joyfully perceived it reflected on

a stream of water for which we had been anxiously looking out since morning. Amidst the timber two waggons were seen drawn up, and human figures, both male and female, moving to and fro, as though engaged in preparations for their night's camp.

There being nothing to alarm us in these appearances, the party being evidently whites, we again pushed ahead of the waggon and rode directly towards them.

As we drew near we perceived a venerable looking old man of unmistakeably Anglo-Saxon physiognomy, seated on the shafts of his waggon, and engaged with a two-handed knife in whittling what seemed to be some appurtenance of the vehicle.

A little in his rear three young women were superintending some utensils at the fire, which from the savoury steam that issued from them seemed charged with material for their supper, and on the borders of the rivulet four or five well-grown youths were plying their important tasks of cutting wood for the

camp-fire and hobbling the wearied teams which, freed from the appliances of their labour, were solacing themselves during the operation by cropping the sweet herbage at the side of the water course.

The old man courteously returned my greeting, and saying to one of the youths who had sauntered up, "Here, Jonathan, you whip us all at whittling; just get this spoke finished off, and let us have the tire on before it gets dark," invited us to alight and partake of what cheer he had to offer.

Stimulated by the keen prairie air we did not wait a second bidding, but after unharnessing and sidelining our cattle ("sidelining" is tying the fore and hind legs on the same side within eighteen or twenty inches of each other) joined the little circle at the fire to which the presence of females conferred so unwonted an attraction.

Of these the eldest alone had arrived at womanhood, and seldom had my eye rested on a fairer specimen of the English (for such

we found she was) country maid. Her person was of middle size, tolerably well formed, though it might be somewhat stouter than would have been deemed by "your pinning, screwed-up, wasp-waisted daughters of fashion," exactly conformable with their beau ideal.

A skin of snowy whiteness might be detected in spite of her high modest dress, by one regardful of such matters, whilst a pair of clear bright hazel eyes gave marvellous light and animation to a countenance whose native bloom remained unpaled, and whose purely chiselled features rendered it an eloquent index of the frank and amiable spirit that informed it. A profusion of nut-brown hair, of precisely the same hue and racily harmonising with her eyes, fell unstified by cap, untortured by steel or curl paper, in rich clusters upon her shoulders, completing with the peculiar glory of her sex (if her sex would but only know it) the tale of her simple but extraordinary attractions.

Her two sisters, who seemed yet in their teens, so little resembled her that I at once set them down, as indeed proved to be the case, for the offspring of a second marriage.

The supper being reported ready and the five youths called in from their work, the fair Hannah (such was our Hebe's name among mortals) assumed the direction of the meal, which, after an emphatic grace from her grey-haired sire, was despatched by us all with the appetite and enjoyment to have been expected.

According to the common fashion of the west, and indeed as was not unnatural under the circumstances, the conversation took pretty much of the question and answer form, and I may confess, if we found our new acquaintance somewhat interrogatively disposed, the picture presented by this English family (their nationality was soon apparent) wandering in the guise they were through the wilderness, awoke no little curiosity on my own part.

After finishing our meal the young men returned to their left-off labours, and my host having lighted his pipe, proceeded to communicate to me the following details of his history :—

His name was Richard Wainwright, and he had begun life as a farmer, in his native county, Lincolnshire. Marrying in middle life the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman, he became in due course enriched with the fair girl I have described, and four sons, all of whom he still retained around him.

In his earlier years, he did not scruple to inform me, he had lived more freely than he might have done, and subsequently became deeply tinctured with the important truths of religion which had held great sway over his mind up to the present time.

The particular creed he had adopted was that of the Independents, and a large party of his co-religionists having quitted their neighbourhood for the hopeful shores of the new world, at a time when his farm failed to afford

a sufficient maintenance to his family, he had come to the determination of taking the same step himself.

The State selected as most favorable to his views was Illinois, where his wife early fell a victim to endemic disease. At a later period he had married an American woman, who had made him the father of the two other girls I have mentioned, and a lad now about sixteen, named Jonathan.

His second wife also having died, and his location being found permanently unhealthy, he had made up his mind to change his home a second time, and was yet hesitating in his choice of a future, when a letter was received from his American brother-in-law, who had acquired a large tract of land in the Indian country, near a military post recently established by government, inviting him to come with his family and share in the labour and profits of its management. After due deliberation, he had come to the conclusion of doing so, and we now found him on his road,

having completed the greater part of his long and hazardous journey.

I say, hazardous ; for tho' unaware of it apparently himself, we had received accounts from the trappers and traders met with on the road, of much discontent prevailing and numerous outrages having been lately committed against the whites by the Osage Indians, whose country we were about to enter, and who were at this very time with their allies, the Sioux, engaged in hostilities against the Kansas tribe, in whose territory we then actually were.

Being a man of fearless temperament, he made light of the precautionary arguments I urged, pointed to his five stalwart sons, showed in what safety he had hitherto made his journey, and expressed his confidence with the help of God of enjoying the same good fortune to the end.

Listening to the old man recounting his experiences and expatiating on his prospects, whilst the fire cast its lurid glow upon his

upright but careworn countenance and those of his interesting and interested daughters, I could not help feeling a certain admiration of his fortitude, mingled, however, with a good deal of misgiving, which events now near at hand were too soon and too sadly to justify.

As the night darkened in, the young men (whose bold bearing and vigorous frames might well bear out their father's boast,) came dropping in one by one, and the family circle being at length complete, Hannah handed a well-used volume she had been holding open on her lap, to her sire, who (evidently as a matter of pious usage) proceeded to read a prayer for divine protection ere resigning ourselves to the rest and perils of the night.

This was followed by a short hymn, sung by the three sisters, and we were yet listening to Hannah's sweet voice, as it swelled one of its dying cadences, when a faint whistle was heard in the air above us, and the next instant an Indian arrow struck the earth in our midst.

For a few moments we scarcely knew what to make of the occurrence, and gazed at the mysterious missile in wondering silence ; then Richard, the eldest of the young men, took it up from the ground, and examined it with a simple and rather sottish air of curiosity.

“ Why, here’s a bit of tow on it !” he exclaimed, “ and, as I live, fastened by some of Hannah’s yellow silk.”

The youth handed it to his sister, who in her turn gave it her close attention.

“ Well, can ye make it out, sister ?” he asked. “ It’s your silk, is it not ?”

His father, who had already laid aside his book and spectacles, now demanded, as he resumed the latter, to see the object that was creating such a general sensation, and it was forthwith placed in his hands. As soon as he had satisfied himself it was no frolic on the part of the young men, he said—

“ It certainly looks like your broidering silk, Hannah ; can you explain how it comes to us in this fashion ?”

The fair girl was silent for a time, as tho' trying to solve the mystery in her own mind; then answered, with the air of one who had at length done so :

" Yes, father, I think I can, now. This is part of some silk I gave to the Sioux, Wah-to-gach-to, the day he left us; it was to fasten the feathers on his arrows with, he said; it must surely have come from him."

" As he left but a day before ourselves, and was bound, I understand, in the same direction, it is far from impossible he may be in our neighbourhood now, and this may be merely an Indian frolic on his part.

" But cast as we are, sir," said the old man, turning to me, " among the heathen, it behoves us to keep upon our guard; perhaps yourself, or your friend, who seems to be experienced in border fashions, may help us to a right insight into the matter."

The party last referred to, Jannock, who was leaning on his rifle outside the circle, as though absorbed by the sacred melody he had

been listening to, now righted abruptly about to where the arrow was going its rounds, and in response to Hannah's touch on the arm, said:—

“Eh! what is it, gal? let's have a squint at the cur'osity.”

The article was accordingly passed to him, together with what Richard had called the “bit of tow,” hitherto retained in his hand, and as he glanced alternately from one to the other, a look of disquietude, not unmingled with anxiety, came over his broad, firm-set features.

His first words were in an under-tone to young Hood:—

“Go and bring in the critters, Robin; in with 'em, slick, every hoof; take Jonathan with you, and, hark'ee, boys, keep your eyes skinned whilst you're about it.”

He then made Hannah relate to him all she knew in connection with the circumstance, which was limited to the explanation already

given to her father, when turning to the latter he said :—

“Fri’nd, when it’s snowing scalps, and raining arrows, we may safely reckon there’s a storm blowing up; it’s time to be doin’! whether this we’pon be from fri’nd or foe, you may trust a man who don’t see Injyn shafts, or meet Injyn deviltry now for the first time, that danger’s nigh at hand. This is a human scalp, and though I don’t like to speak sartinly on sich matters, for Injyn guile ain’t fathomable, yet from the fashion it comes I rayther think it’s sent us as a warning to save our own.”

This intimation, as well it might, broke up the social circle and set us all hastily in motion to provide for our immediate safety. The young men were directed to bring in the rest of the cattle as quickly and quietly as possible, and as soon as he saw them off, and not till then, Bryce enquired of me the exact spot where the arrow fell.

The place was pointed out to him, when, after examining it a moment, he remarked :—

“ So, it has had no head to it; the gal’s right, it’s come from some fri’ndly hand, I’m thinkin’; but trust me, it’s come for a warnin’, ne’er a whit the less.”

Whatever was its source, and whatever might be its import, there was obviously but one course to be taken by ourselves, and that was to secure our fortunately united parties against the murderous designs that seemed menaced by the grim portent.

Though the object that had occasioned such dismay must have been launched in quite close proximity to us, not a sound or sight, or token of any kind betrayed the neighbourhood of either friend or foe, and the mystery that attended the incident added a feeling of awe to the alarm it had itself created.

Jannock, as the most experienced of the party, now took the direction of its arrangements.

The three waggons were disposed so as to form three sides of a square, the fourth of which was closed by a fence of felled timber, and in the enclosure thus made the united force took up its position, the women in the centre, almost wholly secured from missiles, and all of us in a measure protected from the danger chiefly to be apprehended, of any sudden rush from an unseen enemy in the dark.

The horses and mules which had been brought in by the youths without molestation were tethered (side-lined as they were) to the outside of the waggons, and in each vehicle, the tilts being partly drawn up, was stationed one of the young men as sentinel, who, favoured by the elevation of his post, and the bright moonlight that prevailed, could command a view for a good gunshot on every side of the encampment.

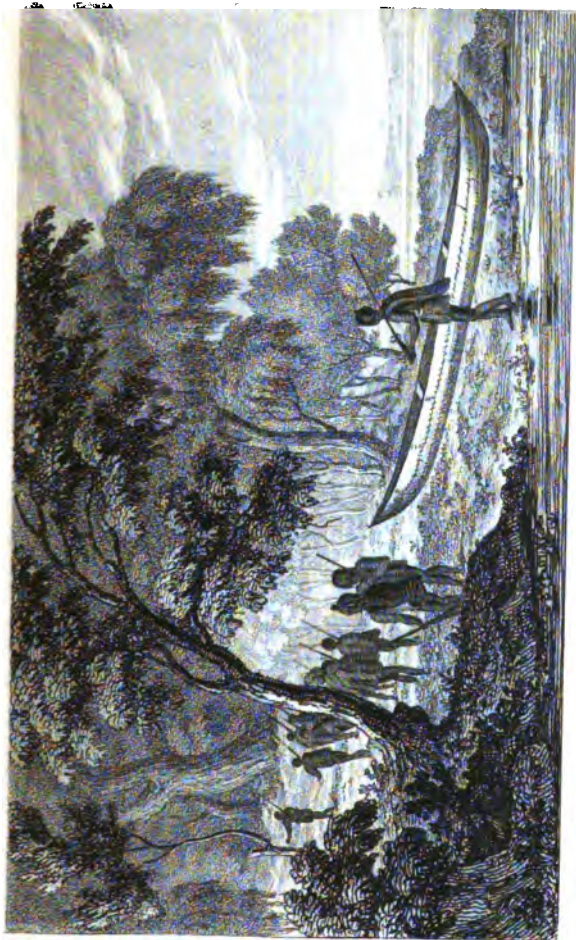
In this fashion we passed the watches of a wakeful and anxious night, happily without

further disturbance than arose from the occasional challenges of the blood-hound, as it snuffed some tainted flaw, or bayed the bright planet that was befriending us with its light.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR first business the next morning was to examine the ground about our camp for traces of our nocturnal visitors, which was done without anything being discovered to indicate their numbers or intentions. We therefore came to the conclusion that our recent alarm was caused by a single individual, who, as surmised by our new acquaintance, might be considered amicably disposed to us, and had chosen this mode of intimating his presence, or playing off an Indian joke.

From this view of the case, however, there was one dissentient, and a pretty stubborn





one, in Bryce Jannock, who reiterated his opinion that the arrow with its fearful appendage had been sent us as a solemn warning, and that neither the one nor the other was likely to have been thrown away for the mere purpose of causing a surprise; he "had been among Injyns, and knew so'thing of their nature, which warn't so fond o' joking as we thought for." He represented that we were now near the country of the Osages, who for injuries real or supposed had sworn hostility to the whites, and that if one of their war-parties had got upon our trail with evil intent, the Sioux Wahtogachto, whose tribe was in alliance with theirs, however well-inclined he might be personally, would yet be unable to control them, or befriend us openly. For anything we knew, there might have been twenty savages round our camp as well as one, who were, perhaps, only deterred from attacking us by our prompt preparations for defence. As for our not discovering their traces, "the wonder would be," said Bryce,

"if you *could* diskiver them; as well might you expect that arro' to leave its trail in the air, as these red-skins to leave theirn on 'arth when they want it hidden, though for all that it's quite as likely as not they may be within hail this very moment. This creek, now, if it had a tongue, might tell us so'thing of their night's doin's; but it's as well not to wake sleepin' snakes; so we'll just see to fixin' our breakfasts, and then slope off softly towards the sundown."

Accordingly after a hasty meal, the two parties resumed their way westwards, all of us anxious to lay as great a space as possible between our last and future camping places.

Whilst pacing along by the side of Hannah's waggon, I took the opportunity in the course of conversation with her of enquiring into the mystery to which she seemed partly privy, connected with our over-night's adventure.

The purport of her explanation was as follows:—

A short time before the family quitted Illinois, a party of Sioux chiefs, who had been on an embassy to Washington, had passed by their abode, and one of their number having fallen ill of a dangerous distemper, had been there left by them with little hope of his recovery. Commiserating his condition, the Wainwrights had admitted him under their roof, where by the charitable and assiduous care of the amiable Hannah, he had at length been restored to health.

Being a better specimen of the redskin genus, he evinced much gratitude to his benefactors for their kind treatment, and more especially to his fair nurse and physician—a gratitude which it was supposed by her half-sisters, who occasionally bantered her upon the subject, would, had it been blessed with adequate encouragement, have readily ripened into a still more ardent feeling.

Under its inspiration, Wahtogachto (such was the Sioux patient's name), on taking leave of his white friends, had given them a

voluntary pledge that notwithstanding the many injuries his tribe had had to complain of from the whites, he would so far as he was himself concerned, henceforth abide their friend, and should any of his benefactors or their countrymen chance to need it, render them what aid and protection he was able.

On parting, half in gratitude and half in gallantry, he had asked his fair preserver for a keepsake, when humouring his wayward fancy, she had presented him with the first article that lay at hand—a reel of yellow silk from her work table.

Since then nothing had been seen or heard of him till the past night, when she received such a startling token of his propinquity in a portion of her own *gaze d'amitie*.

I remarked to her that I was not at all surprised at her Sioux acquaintance hanging about the party as he did, since it contained an object so magnetic as herself, but though his intentions might be friendly (as from the care he had taken to discover himself seemed

likely), yet he might possibly want the power of rendering more effective aid, and strongly advised her to keep, together with her two sisters, as much as possible under shelter of the waggon for the remainder of their journey.

The vehicle that bore her was the second in the line, and conducted by Jonathan and his next elder brother, William, between whom I was not long in perceiving a good deal of bickering going on, as the incidents of the journey offered occasion for it, so much so indeed that the old father found it necessary more than once to ride up and allay the strife. On rejoining me after having done so for the third time, he expressed his regret at the dissension of his two sons. "I can never," he said, "get them to agree; they are always keeping it up in this fashion. William is rather too fond of playing the elder brother, and Jonathan (as true a Yankee as his brother calls him) is very impatient of dictation, and I may say indeed of even need-

ful control at times ; I am afraid I shall have to part with one or the other of them if I wish to avoid further trouble in my family."

Poor old man ! he little foresaw how soon the parting was to be made, and how long it was to last.

Keeping a vigilant look-out, in front and rear, our two companies pursued their way together for this and the two succeeding days, encamping as the nature of the ground offered convenience, and experiencing no further molestation from our late nocturnal visitors.

On the day following, finding our progress very much retarded by the slower movements of the heavy horse waggons, and deeming we had now got a good clearance from our late perils, I determined, after consulting Jannock, as our party had a so much greater distance to perform, and so little time at their disposal, to push ahead of our emigrant friends, and make our way forward with all the expedition possible.

The harmony of the morning had been

somewhat broken by another violent quarrel between Jonathan and William, who had even proceeded to blows, and as we were engaged in getting our team into harness, the former of the young men came up and petitioned to be taken on with our party. Ere deciding on the matter it was of course thought only proper to consult his father, who, moved by the considerations he had mentioned to me, gave his consent to the proposal, which was then readily agreed to by myself, for the lad was alert and useful, full of expedient, and, with the single exception of his unripe age, just the sort of recruit we wanted.

It was after our noon meal that we parted from our respectable associates, encamped on a fine stream, one of the feeders of the Kansas river, where, another of their wheels having been found faulty, they expressed their intention of remaining for the night. Bidding them adieu, with many kind wishes expressed on either side, we started, rather later than we had designed, and travelling on till sunset

added some eight miles more to our morning's march.

We now found ourselves, at last, on the "rolling prairie," that wondrous tract of desert which, stretching with slight exception from the confines of the States to the Rocky Mountains divides, and must for ages continue to divide, the seats of civilization on that vast continent from those of Indian barbarism.

With herbage less luxuriant than that of the plains to the east of the Mississippi, it is still further distinguished from them by that widely undulating formation from which it takes its name, resembling the long, rolling swells of the ocean.

By the traveller, who enters on it for the first time, the impression received too is not dissimilar—the same sensation of immensity alternately quelling and exalting the soul, tincturing it by degrees with a congenial wildness, and producing at times an inspiration which awakens the loftiest strain of thought and feeling.

The position we took up this night was well calculated to excite something of this exalted train of sentiment, the illimitable wold stretching on every side, and no other object visible but the quivering canopy above us, and the sun on the point of disappearing from it.

The imperative duties of our situation, however, the securing our camp against attack, and refreshing ourselves and animals after our day's march, forbade much indulgence in the musing mood.

Our waggon was drawn up on the top of a little swell, in the centre of a hollow surrounded by several higher ones, so as to be entirely hid from sight at even a short distance off. At the bottom of this hollow a little spring feebly forced its way along the ground, in the channel of which we dug a hole as reservoir, and having drawn a supply of the element for our own use, and sidelined the horses and mules, we sent them down to

fare their best on the grateful fluid and juicy herbage.

A couple of hours had passed away, our supper had been cooked and eaten, our pipes sent their last whiffs into the night air, and each of my companions already betaken himself to his sheepskin, when, it being my turn to take the first watch (for we thought it prudent to adopt this precaution now), I shouldered my rifle, and followed by my faithful Bran, repaired to the nearest eminence on my solitary and important duty.

The night was beautifully fine, with but little wind stirring; a host of light, fleecy clouds were slowly sailing across the heavens, dappling the ground with evanescent glooms, and tempering the moonlight splendour with something of an English softness. A deep silence rested on all around, unbroken by any sound, save the low wail of the night wind, and at long intervals something that might have been taken for the far-off roar of the

buffalo, or neigh of the wild horse, but so faint and indefinable, as to suggest little even to the fancy, but the idea of enormous distance.

For the space of nearly an hour I succeeded in maintaining an exemplary vigilance; then, oppressed by the truly desert stillness and solitude of the scene, I seated myself upon the ground, and indulged in a train of rumination, which, though pleasant and profitable enough in its way, the reader would scarce thank me for rehearsing to him.

At length, overcome by my day's toil, a certain degree of drowsiness crept over me, which, I am ashamed to say, was on the point of taking a still more unequivocal form, when a low growl from the bloodhound restored me to befitting wakefulness. He had raised himself on his forelegs, and seemed to have seen or scented some object that had excited his suspicion. After snuffing the air for some moments, he resumed his recumbent posture, though still by occasional grunts giving token

of continued discontent. Seeing nothing to account for this, I began to remonstrate with the animal :—

“ What is it, old dog? (grunt) what is it, kith of well-beloved Norman? (growl). Have you got a *coup de lune*, Bran, that you deport yourself in this way? or do you take this rolling prairie for Leighton Park, your wild-goose master for Joe Blayfield, and this bug-a-boo you’re setting for long Tom Tucker, the deer-stealer? Ah, pup, many’s the long league we are from Leighton, and whether we ever set our six feet there again is extremely dubious to my mind, Bran. (A still deeper growl was the rejoinder.) What, again, speak out, pup, what is it winding? out with it.”

I had scarcely spoken the words when the animal sprung upon its legs, a mass of bristle from head to haunch, and gave expression to its anger in a loud and exasperated barking.

Directed by its action I now fancied I discerned amidst the ground fog of the prairie

the outlines of a human figure, which at first seemed to be in motion, then became stationary, and then again moved towards me at a good rate. Seeing it was but a single individual, and commanding as I did an extensive range of view, which secured me from surprise, I controlled my first impulse to alarm my party, and determined to await the phantom's approach.

As soon as it had come within hail I perceived it to be an Indian, and presenting my firelock warned him to advance no nearer. To this challenge he responded by spreading out the palms of his hands in sign of amity. I now observed that he was armed and in his war paint; but as though to remove any distrust I might conceive on this score, he proceeded with much display to lay down the tomahawk and short gun he carried upon the ground.

This being so far satisfactory, I then allowed him to come within discoursing distance, when pointing to his brawny chest, he said by way

of introduction, "Wahtogachto—friend of white man;" then added with emphasis, "Why is my brother waiting here when the scalping knife is drawn to slay his brethren? when the Osage is lurking round their wigwams and watching for the hour to strike his blow? My brother no wish paleface blood to flow—his paleface sisters to be rubbed out; come, then, Wahtogachto lead you, and save the Whitebell and the greyhair from the tomahawk."

He spoke with the utmost earnestness permitted to an Indian warrior, and, the matter being of such startling import, I hastened at once to the camp and roused up my companions to consult with on it.

As soon as Jannock heard the statement, he made the Sioux repeat it over to him, and then said, "By the Lord, squire, I believe the lad speaks truth; this is the redskin the young gal spoke of; the riptyles are still hanging on our trail it seems, and we may have to speak a word to them with our shoot-

in' ir'ns arter all, for this sticking so close looks ugly. Wull, if we're to give our frinds a helping hand (and I s'pose we're of one mind as to that matter) there ain't no time to lose about it, for these Osages are very devils at haar-raisin'."

There being no dissentient voice to this proposal we armed ourselves to the teeth for our work, found a spare pistol for Jonathan (he already had a rifle, which he well knew how to use), and then putting ourselves under the Sioux's guidance, bore away at a rapid rate for our friends' camp.

An hour's hard walking (indeed the Indian's pace kept us mostly on the trot) speedily brought us over the first five miles, to a grove of oak trees, where we observed our guide look about him inquiringly, and then make a full stop besides an object that lay upon the ground.

On coming up we discovered it, to our horror, to be the corpse, miserably mutilated, of William Wainwright.

His brother no sooner saw it, than flinging down his rifle he threw himself upon the prostrate form in a paroxysm of grief; he remembered they had lately parted in anger, and his distress seemed augmented beyond all control by the revulsion of his feelings from the circumstance.

The time, however, was not one to allow of their long indulgence, and he was recalled to the exigencies of the moment by Jannock's stern yet sympathetic voice.

"We must leave poor William for the present, Jonathan, and see to dealin' justice on his slayers. Come, boy, get up your shootin' ir'n, and let us see if we can't make 'em rue this business as well as ourselves."

Bryce had touched the right chord. Poor Jonathan stifled down the anguish of his heart, and thenceforth all his soul became absorbed in the single, intense desire of vengeance.

From the fatal grove to the imperilled camp was little more than two miles, and on tracing this the Indian frequently turned round to urge

upon us the necessity of caution. On arriving at the last swell of ground that intervened he bade us halt, and followed by Jannock only, crept stealthily to the summit, where both remained for some minutes engaged in observation of our enemies. As soon as the latter rejoined us, which he did alone, he said, in a whisper :

“ We shall have to slope off to the left, squire, and cross the river lower down. Wahto’s people I find are in league with these ragamuffins, and he says he can’t take part agin them, or do anything more to stead us. They’re swarming round the waggons like spring bees ; but the boys have kept them off, it seems, so far, Jonathan, and I think will be able to hold their own till we can get up to help them.”

The youth he addressed, excited almost to frenzy by occasional dropping shots from his kinsmen, urged with much earnestness an immediate attack upon the Osages from where we were ; but this was firmly tho’ gently

opposed by Jannock, who represented they were altogether too strong for such an attempt on this side. "It would be," said he, "as good as giving them our scalps with our own hands; have but a little patience, and you'll see they'll lose nothing by waitin'."

Bryce now put himself at our head, and led us in Indian file along the back of the swell that hid us from the foe, till, after about half a mile's progress, we reached the river, there some fifty yards in breadth. This we then crossed, and availing ourselves of the willows on its bank, stole along the other side till we gained a point directly opposite the farmer's camp, which, however, was yet shut out from view by a long narrow island that lay between. In this it was Bryce's intention we should post ourselves, which, favoured by a high spine-like ridge that ran along it, we succeeded (fording the intervening stream) in doing without being discovered by the enemy. A scanty growth of bushes on the top afforded us partial cover,

and we now obtained a full view, at about seventy yards off, of the beleagured party we had come to succour.

The two waggons were seen drawn up in a hollow between two little hills, so as to form two sides of a square, the third being closed by a hastily made stockade, and the remaining one having no other defence than the river, on which, however, the vehicles abutted so closely as to render impracticable all passage between them and it.

This being the side nearest ourselves, we could look into the very heart of the farmer's camp, where, amid bales of goods and articles of household furniture, the three females were seen cowering, and their four kinsmen ambushed, whilst, with their rifles pointed through the crevices, they watched the movements and awaited the onset of their savage foe. The latter also were partially visible to us, lurking amid the willows on the outer slopes of the two eminences, and waiting in fearful stillness their favourite hour, a little

before daybreak, or perchance some preconcerted signal for making the decisive rush. The moonlight fell upon their swarthy forms, and showed us many a savage face, dark with anticipation of fell deeds, or brightened by expected triumph. It rested also on the river between us, and as its tranquil stream stole by, rippling its lullaby to slumbering nature, it was difficult to imagine a scene so fair would soon become the theatre of outrage.

We had been lying for nearly an hour esconced amongst the herbage of the ridge, with our cocked rifles in full bearing on the threatened point, waiting for an opportunity of delivering an effective volley, and had begun to perceive symptoms of relaxed vigilance on the part of the garrison, when from the thick shadows of the islet shore beneath us suddenly arose the whoop of a screech owl. Jannock no sooner heard the sound than, griping me by the arm, he whispered, "as I live here's one of the riptyles right in among us ! they've set him here for a spy ;

see, his brother vagabonds have heard his cry and are drawin' down to the water for a rush—quiet, quiet, Jonathan, or you'll skear the game just as it's getting its nose into the trap. I suspicion they're goin' to charge in on the water side—see how they're creepin' along the bank, and how cleverly they steal up to the waggons—your father must surely be asleep, Jonathan—well, now, boy," said Bryce, slowly raising the redoubted True-groove, "is the time to awaken him and pay off the score for poor William—lay on and fire when I give the word."

The savages, whilst he was making his comments (carefully watching them the while) were seen gliding stealthily along by the river bank with the evident intention of bursting into the camp by the side that had no other protection.

Some of them had already entered the water both above and below the threatened point, and were got indeed almost within

tomahawk swing of their expected victims, when, Bryce giving the word, our rifles poured forth their fatal contents, and stretched the two foremost of each attacking party dead in the shallows they were wading through.

Scarcely had our pieces been discharged, when darting from his shady lair beneath us the Indian who had given the signal plunged into the river and endeavoured to make his escape to his comrades.

For a few moments the shadow of the island shrouded his figure from our aim, but no sooner had he passed into the moonlight than instantaneous death overtook him from our three pistols, and a long shot from the farmer's camp. "That owl's screeched his last any how," was the poor wretch's funeral oration from the lips of Jannock.

This last shot shewed the Wainwrights were now on the alert, and the Indians panic-struck by the sudden blow they had received, having sought cover, Bryce permitted Jona-

than, after giving him certain private instructions, to cross the water and rejoin his family.

Deprived though they were, of five of their leading braves it was not likely that our adversaries who, much superior in number, had so perseveringly dogged our trail and knew full well the smallness of our force, would abandon their object without some further endeavour to effect it, or at any rate avenge their loss, and for our own part, even with the two parties united, there seemed little hope of being able to push our advantage farther.

Whilst these considerations were occurring to us, Jannock announced he had formed a plan which he thought would relieve us of the enemy at least for a time, and which with characteristic hardihood, he volunteered to execute in person. It was this:—

On first reconnoitring their position, he had observed their horses as well as those they had taken from the emigrants collected in a

bottom some little distance in their rear ; if these could be by any means let loose or stampeded, their masters would be forced to quit their ambush in order to recover them. In the attendant confusion we might then reunite our parties and strike such other blow as would deter them from molesting us further.

Our fearless volunteer, depositing his rifle with us, and armed only with his knife, entered the water at the back of the island, and swimming for some distance down the stream landed, without being seen by the Osages, on their own side. Here we lost him and waited for some time in anxious suspense for the appointed signal, occasionally exchanging greetings with our friends over the stream, when suddenly a shot was heard from their camp, followed by a warning from Jonathan that Indians had been seen on the island stealing towards us. We might now, then, hear their yell, and feel their knives in our hair at any moment.

Old Wainwright called out to us to descend to the shore over against himself, where he thought he might be able to cover us with his fire, and pay back the good service we had rendered him ; but here, unless we could find some rock or other shelter (which we in vain sought for), we should on the other hand be exposed to the aim of the unseen enemy round his camp.

Robin and myself were still debating the matter, feeling the while a vivid consciousness that we were earning our 'wrinkles' a good deal too fast to be pleasant, when the anxiously-expected signal blast was heard and at once determined our procedure. We remained a short space longer till the beat of galloping cattle became audible, then seeing the Redskins, as we expected, starting from their lairs in pursuit, dashed down to the river and succeeded in joining our allies in safety.

It appeared Jannock had already instructed them through Jonathan, as to the part they were to take, and the time being ripe and the

party ready, we all, with the exception of George and Jacob Wainwright (who were left to guard their sisters), sallied forth from the waggons on our secret and avenging mission.

As had been expected, the Osages had abandoned their near position, and were now heard whooping and yelling over the plain in pursuit of their fugitive quadrupeds.

Not wishing to jeopardise our little band by proceeding too far from quarters, we halted at about a furlong's distance, and availing ourselves of a thicket of willows that bordered a bottom through which the enemy would be likely to return, we carefully concealed ourselves therein, and waited patiently for an opportunity of dealing them a telling blow.

Not many minutes had elapsed when it became evident, from their lumbering gallop growing momentarily louder and louder, that a troop of stampeded horses was approaching us, and, on their presently coming in sight, the Wainwrights at once recognised them as their own draught team, which, impelled by

panic and followed by two or three shouting savages, were tearing wildly along to their familiar station.

Young Richard proposed we should fire on the wild drovers as they passed, and so re-secure the animals so indispensable for their future movements, but ere there was well time to decide upon it, Jonathan directed our attention to another band, who, riding their re-captured steeds, were following hard on the other's tracks. Keeping close in our cover, we silently watched the latter as they drew near, to the number of a dozen or more, when to our unspeakable astonishment and dismay, we beheld by the bright moonlight, his hands bound behind his back, and his legs tied under his horse's belly — our brave, self-devoted Jannock in their midst.

Though so greatly out-numbered we resolved to attempt his rescue at all hazards, and concerted a plan for doing so on the instant. As the Indians passed our ambush we delivered, at a given signal, a general volley,

Jonathan and myself aiming at and dismounting the two guards who rode at the prisoner's side, and Robin leveling at the head of the animal he rode. The piece of the latter, however, unfortunately missing fire, went near defeating our purpose altogether.

Bryce, as soon as he saw us, called out, forgetful of his own safety, "Back! back to camp! or they'll be cuttin' you off." These had nearly been his last words. The tomahawk of the Indian behind him was already raised to cleave his skull, when at that critical moment, Hood, who had refreshed his priming, discharged an effective shot, and the stricken "mustang," forging madly forwards, tore away with its helpless rider in the trail of the cattle that had first passed.

The fire from the rest of the party had taken more or less effect, which we scarcely however stopped to note; for, alarmed by Jannock's warning, after hastily re-charging our pieces, we turned our whole attention to effecting a retreat to our quarters. The band

of Osages we were engaged with had for the most part now dismounted, and, reinforced by numerous stragglers, followed as closely up, scattering themselves for vantage over the ground, and plying us with arrows from any cover afforded by its herbage or inequalities.

Notwithstanding these manœuvres, several of their number had already fallen beneath our fire, and we were now within a little of regaining the camp, when a yell was heard on our flank, and a fresh party of savages were seen running up at full speed to cut us off from it.

There was, therefore, nothing left for it but to turn our backs at once on our former foes, and try our speed with the latter in a run for life.

The crafty Indians had taken the inner line along the river side, where lay the entrance made for the occasion to the encampment, and as the two parties converged to this point at equal speed, and nearly abreast, got up, un-

fortunately, in time to shut off the important passage.

In the headlong impulse of our flight, we had run right in among the frightened waggon horses, which, when cut loose by Jan-nock, had instinctively made for their wonted station, and in this unpromising position, overtaken on the instant by both bands of our pursuers, we at once found ourselves engaged in a hand to hand conflict, with at least three times our numbers.

This was overwhelming odds, and in this sort of struggle our superior weapons were of comparatively little service. Those of us whose pieces were still loaded had barely time to deliver a last discharge, which felled the foremost of our pursuers, and then the cleaving tomahawk, and keen-edged knife were alone relied on to inflict, or avert death.

Snorting and groaning in the midst of the *melée*, the unfortunate waggon team served as shields from many a well meant blow, and

enabled us to give telling returns to them with our trusty hunting knives.

Young Jonathan, who was nearest to me, and, boy as he was, fought with the tact of a man, and asperity of a wild cat, disposed of more than one Indian in this way, sheltering himself from their blows, when hard pressed, with wonderful activity, among the animals. He even found opportunity of giving aid to his father, who, armed only with his empty firelock, had been set upon by two savages at once, one of whom having caught his cumbersome weapon in his hand, was on the point of despatching him with his long knife, when Jonathan, whose slight frame had at last been for a moment prostrated, sprung from the ground at the assailant, and stabbed him to the heart with his own. The tomahawk of the other was already raised over the old man's head, when a jet of flame issued from the waggon behind him, and the Osage fell dead to the earth, by a shot fired within the vehicle.

At the commencement of the struggle I had brought down one of our adversaries, by the last discharge of my rifle, and was defending myself with my hunting knife, resolved, like the rest of us, if indeed we were to be 'rubbed out,' as seemed likely, to give the enemy as dear a bargain as might be, when a stunning blow on the head, from a tomahawk, laid me senseless on the ground.

How long I lay there, I know not, but on coming to myself, I found the fray was over, and the place strewn with several carcasses, both of men and horses.

Whilst endeavouring to raise myself up, in order to ascertain the results of the conflict, and gain a more satisfactory position, my ears were suddenly saluted by a voice hard by me, sharpened and cramped by pain.

"Wull, squire, you're comin' to at last; I was afeard you had about gone under; can you make out, think ye, to snip these blasted thongs, that are cutting my flesh like so many butcher knives. I've been wishin' me dead

and buried, I have, all this time, lying here to as little purpose while you've been having your spree out; thankee—now this—so—now the knife—now let me see if I can't pay off these gentry for their kind services, and larn 'em the right uses of a buffalo hide. You've beaten 'em off tho', that's a fact; it's the shots from the waggon as done it—I'm afeard Jonathan has got nicked tho', and the old man so'thin' scored about the sconce, but we'll in, and see."

Whilst assisting each other to rise, Bryce explained to me how I had happened to find him in his present predicament.

It appeared he had been discovered and run down upon the prairie, shortly after achieving his main object, by some mounted Indians, and fastened for security in the manner we had witnessed to a half-wild mustang, which, after receiving its wound from Robin, had carried him helplessly away hither, where it had fallen in death among its household mates.

What were his sensations in this position, with a conflict for life and death (his own included) going on about him, may be best left to the reader's imagination.

The strife, I say, as it stood, was ended, but an occasional dropping shot from the waggons still showed that the neighbourhood of the foe was apprehended.

Having at length got upon our legs, and notified our presence by an intelligible hail, we rounded the camp by the water side, and found ourselves, to the great joy of both parties, once more among our old associates.

CHAPTER IX.

NEARLY all of them were suffering from wounds more or less severe, and on entering the enclosure we found the three women busily engaged in various offices for their relief.

By the light of a fire it had been found necessary to kindle for the purpose Hannah was binding up her father's head, which showed several ugly cuts, though happily none of a very dangerous character. Jonathan, who had received a slight hurt on the same part, was "playing the doctor on his own behalf," whilst his two remaining sisters divided their

cares between their elder brother and our Robin, whose shoulder bore token of a severe tomahawk blow, not so considerable, however, as to prevent him eyeing with a good deal of attention the fair form of the eldest maiden, as, with sleeves tucked up, and face glowing with affectionate anxiety, she rendered her loving service to her parent.

The poor females, during our absence, and especially whilst the deadly conflict was going on in which they held so dear a stake, had, as might have been expected, passed a fearful time of it, so much so indeed as well nigh to make them wish for some of the strokes that were being dealt so liberally about them, to shorten the agony of their suspense.

The favourable issue of the combat was, as averred by Jannock, mainly owing to the two youths who had been left as their protectors.

To these had been allotted all the spare fire-arms that could be mustered, so as to make up by the completeness of their equip-

ment for the paucity of their numbers, consisting of their own two rifles, their unfortunate brother William's, which he had left behind him on his ill-starred errand to the oak grove, and Bryce Jannock's Truegroove, together with a double-barrelled fowling-piece and pair of pistols, making in all a battery of eight shots.

So soon as they became aware the fight was tending towards them, they had got into the more advanced of the waggons, looped up the awning so as to gain an open space for shooting through, and thus, as the foe came up, with every advantage of position, freshness, and *sang froid*, had dealt (particularly George, whose listless mien covered something of Jannock's quiet promptitude) those telling shots which had freed us one by one of our opponents at the most critical moments of the battle.

The second circumstance that operated in our favour was the narrow space in which the fray had been confined, preventing their

full force from being brought to bear on us at once; and the third, as before mentioned, the opportune presence of the waggon horses.

My own injury was of but trifling moment, the force of the blow having been deadened by a stout India handkerchief that happened to be within my hat at the time.

Sleep was little likely to visit our eyelids during the remainder of the night, but, exhausted by their bodily injuries, excitement, and fatigue, the harassed household (Jacob excepted, who with Jannock and myself had volunteered to take the remaining watch) laid themselves down by their camp fire to snatch what repose was in their power.

My station being on the river side opposite the island, I esconced myself under the tail of the waggon, and was ruminating on the late events and the ill augury they offered for my own prospects, when I beheld Hannah, her ministrations ended, come down to the water with a pail in her hand as if for the purpose of filling it, instead of which, however, she

set the empty utensil on the ground, and sitting down besides it gave vent to her overwrought feelings in a passionate flood of tears.

I went up and endeavoured to console her by representing how effectually the enemy had been repulsed, and danger, for the present, at least, averted, and that though there was certainly some damage to deplore, we had also a great deliverance to be thankful for. On which, checking for a moment the flow of her grief, she said, " Oh, sir, what a night we've had—to you how much we owe ! Yes, I do feel grateful—grateful to the Lord, and grateful to you, whom He has sent at our sore need to save us ; but oh ! with poor William gone, and my father and all of them so badly hurt—all so near being ——" The afflicted girl was unable to finish the sentence, and the tears again found their way plentifully from her eyes.

As soon as she became somewhat more composed I inquired into the circumstances

attending the fate of her younger brother, which, with much interruption from her feelings, she related to me as follows—

It appeared that, chafed by some rebuke he had received from his father in reference to his late quarrel with Jonathan, William had quitted the camp in the afternoon for the alleged purpose of cutting some oak wood for the damaged wheel in a grove some little distance off, which was the nearest place it could be got.

Time passed on, and, still remaining absent, Hannah, in her anxiety, got out her Bible sooner than was usual, in order that their father, who always liked the family circle to be complete at prayer time, might take the earlier note of his son's absence, "when," said she, "just as he was beginning to remark upon it, another of those headless arrows that startled us so a few nights since came whirring down among us. We were all dreadfully alarmed at it this time on account of William being away, and my father

and brothers took their guns immediately, and went in a body to bring him back. This it, alas ! was doomed they should never do (here poor Hannah again gave way to her emotion, and then continued). It has pleased the Almighty to take our brother from us, but had not my father and the rest set out to search for him, we should surely every one of us have shared his fate, for no sooner had they reached the first rise than they found these horrid savages had stolen all round the camp, and were obliged to retreat instantly in order to save sisters and me from being tomahawked by them. And so we could do nothing more to help poor William, and were all watching and mourning in this most miserable state when you and Robin and Mr. Jannock came up just in time to save our lives. And Robin too has got sorely hurt in fighting for us ——”

“He don’t mind that a divot when it’s to help you, Hannah,” quoth that individual in person, coming up at the moment, and his

gallant speech and the stout heart it bespoke seemed to have a renovating influence on the spirits of the drooping fair one.

“Father thinks you had better go in and rest ye now, and so think I, syne you’ve had sich a skeary time on’t, and you needn’t fear the wild men any more, he says, for we’ve guv’em their gruel and sent ’em to bed, and I’ve got another arm yet, and the better of the two to ensure ye rest in peace and rise up in safety, Hannah.”

And the sorrowing maiden, drying her tears, complied with the kindly summons.

Morning at length dawned, and as soon as it became sufficiently light to view our ground, a party of four, including old Wainwright himself, set out for the clump of oak wood, to bring back the body of his slaughtered son for the purpose of burial.

The place was soon reached, and while the father was indulging his sorrow over the corpse, and Jannock and myself were employing ourselves in constructing a litter to bear it, Robin

was sent off to a neighbouring knoll to ascertain if the coast was clear, and warn us in good time if any danger should present itself.

Our task was but half performed when we beheld him running back at the top of his speed, shouting out, as he did so, "Indians! Indians!" On coming up, he affirmed he had seen a large mounted band approaching from the westward, which he computed to be near a hundred in number, as they stretched in a long line over the prairie, and he had counted five caps in the first rank.

Jannock smiled when he heard this. "Caps, lad! first rank! we needn't be in a hurry, squire, I'm thinkin'; a hundred Injyns with caps on! that'll be a newity to me, Robin; come, we'll go have another peep at the bogles."

So saying he strode off towards the place of observation, and having carefully examined the objects of alarm, returned with that leisurely gait that at once dispelled apprehension. He pronounced the approaching

cavalcade to be a company of traders—in all probability, the very one we had been so long looking for, and in a few minutes their files were seen descending the slope towards us, when, rejoiced at the opportune arrival of such needful succour, we promptly went forth to meet them.

It proved to be as we conjectured, the brigade in which were the two trappers we had hoped to engage as auxiliaries, and moreover, to our friend Wainwright's equal surprise and satisfaction, he here met with his American brother-in-law, who had been compelled, by a series of Indian outrages, to abandon his purchase in the Sioux country, and was now, with his family, and what live stock he had been able to save, in full retreat for the settlements.

This, tho' of course a disappointment to himself, was a truly providential circumstance to our Lincolnshire friend, who, with great part of his cattle killed, and soon to be deprived of our assistance, would have found

himself, but for this chance in a very forlorn and desperate position.

As we wended our way back to the camp, carrying the remains of the murdered youth, I took the opportunity of conferring with the two stark trappers, who had been recommended to us by our friend the gunsmith. To my extreme chagrin, however, I found neither money nor persuasion could prevail either upon one or the other to turn back with us, till they had enjoyed their month or two's holiday in the settlements; nor had we better success with several others of their class whom we sounded to the same end.

This was truly a heavy blow and great discouragement to us, but having already advanced so far on our enterprise, there was no course left us but to persevere.

Having stayed, therefore, over the funeral, and made a last vain attempt to shake the resolution of the two voyageurs, we once more (for the last time), bade farewell to our worthy countrymen, whom Jonathan of course re-

mained with, and proceeded on our return to our own camp.

Thanks to its sheltered situation, it had remained entirely unmolested, and poor Antoine, who had passed but an anxious time of it during our absence, welcomed us back with absolute capers of delight.

Getting in motion by sunrise the next morning, we pursued for many days together our lonely course over the prairie, meeting with no living object, save an occasional prairie fowl, too wild to admit of approach, and our dreary labour varied only by the periodical halts for refreshing ourselves and animals.

The waggon, as it rolled over the hardened ground, experienced slight obstruction from its vegetation, which had become thin and stunted, affording but little nutriment to the cattle, and cropped by them with evident disrelish.

The country, indeed, as before observed, had altogether altered from the rich luxuriant

meadows we had first crossed, and bore more and more as we advanced, the unmistakeable impress of a desert.

After the first few days of travel in it the eye becomes wearied with its sameness, and hails, with an exile's eagerness, any unwonted feature—any clump of trees—bosky brake—lonely hill—or even dried up water course, that may afford relief from its monotony. Yet when the noonday sun had sunk, and freed from its mastering glare, the faculties of the wayfarer revive, he may find even in this signless waste, an interesting field of contemplation.

It may then come perchance upon his mind that in the plains around him, as in those of Egypt and Assyria, he looks upon the grave of extinct nations and departed empires, which a still greater lapse of time has even more sweepingly obliterated, and which he may amuse his fancy with the fond endeavour to resuscitate. He may crest the mounds before him with the walls of cities—people their

silent slopes with humming crowds—raise up the crumbled halls, the sleeping shade of royalty—muster its time-quelled armies round about—and plant in yon sea-like tract a nation ‘numerous as the stars of heaven.’

He will figure them heathens, unblest by the light that saves, worshipping Astarte in the queen of night, and crushed beneath some central tyranny, which ever in these even regions, seems to find its peculiar sphere of exercise. He will then see corruption sap their strength, the enemy’s inroads wear them down (even as may be seen at present in a neighbouring state), till an entire people would become extinct, together with, in the lapse of ages, their dwellings, their monuments, their very sepulchres.

Such, to his apprehensive fancy, may be the vision of its former days suggested by the “rolling prairie,” whose very soil seems to tell their exhaustive might, and begrudge in its meagre herbage even the dole of a decent winding-sheet.

Pushing our way under fine autumnal skies, we had travelled several weeks since parting with our English friends, when, our stock of fresh meat having "given out," throwing us thereby sooner than was to be wished upon our cherished reserved stores, it was determined to lie by for a day and try our luck in hunting for procuring a fresh supply.

The resolution was partly prompted by our having reached a tract of country whose appearance gave better promise of success than any we had lately seen, showing a somewhat richer growth of grass, and affording in the brakes that intersected it, a likely harbourage for game.

Coming, a little before sunset, upon a convenient pool of water, we accordingly unharnessed the wearied mules, despatched our evening meal, and then Jannock and myself, shouldering our rifles, went forth to reconnoitre the scene of our intended hunt.

Passing over a small space of prairie, we came upon a wild ravine of varying width

and character; here almost choked up with intermingled grass and briars, there broadening into sheltered bays, where, secure from ruffling winds, many wild flowers still gemmed the ground, and threw their unspent sweets upon the senses.

My comrade eyed it with professional complacency; it was a spot well qualified to please him, affording fair promise at least of what we wanted. "I'll bet a plug o' Virginy we raise so'thin' purpose-like hereaway," was his encouraging remark.

After skirting it for some length, we descended its rugged sides, and whilst I amused myself in looking at the wild-flowers, Jan-nock went forward to a point where the ravine made a sudden turn. Following him with my eye, I presently perceived him silently signaling me to come up, on doing which, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and pointed my attention to the object which had fixed his own.

Sloping to the brake in which we stood was

a long prairie swell, on the summit of which, at a distance of some three hundred yards, drawn like a rock against the empurpled sky, and stirless as its statued semblance from the mounds of Nimroud, stood a solitary buffalo bull.

Magnified by the relief of its position, it presented a truly imposing figure, and seemed in that crystal atmosphere to be so near, that we could discern even the hairy curls upon its shoulder glistening in the purple sunlight. We stood for several minutes regarding it with silent interest, when the necessities of our condition recurring to me, I proposed in a whisper to my comrade, who was quietly smiling at my absorption, that we should forthwith convert him into buffalo beef.

“ Well, you may say you’ve seen buffalo at last ; come to grizzly by and by ; ’taint no use tho’ pullin’ on the critter—old bull—no gettin’ teeth into him—break a pick-axe—be kearful not to skear the old chap as we go

back, and we'll see (an all go right) if we can pick up his youngsters in the morning."

We accordingly returned with all circumspection to our camp, taking from time to time a backward peep at the lonely bison, which remained in his solemn immobility to the last.

Jannock, I had noticed, in his keen but furtive way, had more carefully examined the ground as we came back, and on one occasion gone a little aside to pick up some object that had caught his eye.

Having seated ourselves on the grass for a parting whiff, this he now produced from his pocket, looked at it long and narrowly, and then; turning to me, commenced his discourse in this wise:

"I won't ask you, squire, if you've ever been hunted for in the old country —; well, you may snigger, but such has been my fortin' more than onst, and a sweatin' sort o' pastime it is. Now, I'm older, so'thin', than I was,

and shorter in the wind a long chalk, but if you'd like to try your chance, it strikes me you've only to turn out arter that bull buffalo we've been sightin'. Time was when the critter seemed to go down all the sweeter for a relish of Injyn sarse, but sitiuated as we are at present with hands mostly green, and few at that, and a long trail to follow up, I think it only dootiful to tell you that if we go out to-morrow arter game, we are quite as like as not to get bagged ourselves. There's Injyn 'sign' in yon gulley, not two days old, and see what I've picked up but awhile syn." He put into my hands a strip of green buffalo hide, which showed evident marks of recent rending. "That leather's been snapped syn last sun rise; the dog, too, has been oneasy ever syne we sot down here; it's possible the pup's green like the rest on us, and has got wind of the old bull yonder, which will be new game to it, I reckon; but I rayther judge from its ways it's so'thin' uglier still."

"It must be the devil himself then, Bryce,

for surely nothing else in nature can be uglier than an old buffalo bull."

"That is, more mischievous and malicious—you onderstand, but lettin' alone dog and leather, there's so'thin' tells me—a wee sma' vice that comes o' forty years exper'ence, that whether it be them Osages we've flogged, or See-hoo on the hunt or war path, there's red men about us at this moment within reach of a smart halloo; so we'll jest run the waggon into the bottom yonder, and I'll head up your mare to it to keep the mules from strayin', for they'll stick to the cretur like 'lassus, and by keepin' a bright watch thro' the night and all quiet we may slip away softly by day break."

Laying by my pipe at this information I assisted him in taking the precautionary steps he had suggested, and being myself told for the third watch, lay down to rest till my turn of duty should arrive.

It was past midnight when I was aroused, and rising with the stiff reluctance of a jaded post-horse, I repaired to my station on the

summit of the nearest swell, taking my blanket with me as a guard against the corrosive night air.

A harsh unpleasant wind had got up, which breathed in low moans through the rugged dingle, whilst above, the moon, now in its last quarter and but newly risen, showed its wan crescent over a bank of clouds.

Whether we worship her as a goddess or salute her as a sweetheart, the sacred orb of night must ever attach our sympathies, awakening the memory, kindling the imagination, and softening the heart; elevating us for the time above the dead level and groveling routine of life.

Here on the bleak prairie knoll I fully recognized her influence, and was in the full flow of that mental oblectation which solaces the present from the stores of the past and future, when my eye was caught by the form of Jan-nock, followed by the trusty bloodhound, moving from the camp towards me.

“There’s so’tin’ keeps the dog afret,

Squire," he whispered, on coming up, "and tells me there's mischief stirring. I reckon I'll take a short stretch along the praira, and see if I can get into the secret of the matter!"

On hearing this I straightway offered to accompany him, and leaving my blanket behind, whose color might have attracted observation, we proceeded cautiously up the wind, guided by the action of the hound, and halting on every rise to gather by the eye or ear any floating sign that might assist us in detecting danger.

It happened in the course of our walk that having to tarry awhile for the purpose of fastening my moccassin, I observed Jannock, who had meanwhile gone forward, come to a sudden halt.

On going up I found him standing in the inside of a circle formed of buffalo skulls, whitened by time and weather into the semblance of marble, and wearing in the pallid moonlight a mystic, monumental aspect. In the centre rose a little pyramid of the same

materials, built with much compactness and greenstained by time. The grass grew short about it, exposing the spectral pile in its full significance, and the heavy nightwind as it swept into the swale whistled and moaned through its ghastly masonry.

"There!" remarked Jannock, in a low tone as I came up, "what make ye o' this now, squire? droll, ain't it?"

I could not discover the drollery; it was the witching time of night when the spirits are most impressible, and the spot under the circumstances was one to inspire only interest and awe.

"Is it not extraordinary, Bryce," said I giving vent to the thoughts which it suggested, "that from the earliest ages and the oldest regions of the globe down to this recent fabric of the Indians, we find these curious rings constructed by heathen nations. In the old country now you may see them built of stones, whose date neither writing nor tradition has declared, that have stood the wear

of twenty—aye of thirty centuries, and these it is likely are but copies from older lands where the human race was first planted, and religious ritual first cultivated. This ring now that we look at, I should say it had reference to some religious usage. Do you imagine these Osages and Sioux and the rest of them ever offer up human sacrifices to their Gods—Bel, for instance, or Astarte?"

"If Bel means belly, I'll not deny but they'll bolt a bit of human now and then when 'casion sarves, but their favoryte eatables is hoss, dog, and bufflo; when fairly gorged with these, it ain't so easy to 'start' 'em unless, maybe, with a rifle shot or war-whoop, or so'thin' o' that sort."

"Then again, whence this circular formation?"

"Belike it was to dance round, or maybe, some of their braves is buried here; one often finds these bones by Injyn burial places."

"No, Bryce; it has taken its shape from

the divinities they worshipped—the sun—the moon—or more probably still the general cope of heaven, which would thus be the pantheon of their Gods. Then again the circle is the emblem of eternity. Among the ancient Romans—you've heard of the Romans, Bryce—trinkets of this form were exchanged as pledges of perpetual love; I once knèw a young lady—”

“Whisht, squire! look at the dog.”

The bloodhound who was lying at our feet lifted up his head, and after sniffing the passing air uttered a low admonitory growl, contenting himself with which he resumed his former posture whilst we remained a moment silent conjecturing what his action might import.

“A stray buffalo perhaps.”

Bryce shook his head dissentingly.

I continued, “I once knew a young lady—”

“Whisht, whisht, squire! darn the young

lady (that I should say so) d'ye hear nothing now?"

We again ceased speaking, and listened attentively. The moon had by this become obscured by clouds, and standing as we were between two slopes, our field of vision was but limited; on the ear, however, there now grew a distant trampling sound, like that of galloping herds. Now it came loud and full, as though borne from the summit of a swell—now it faded away as if lost in a hollow—and now again we thought it neared us, and listened till the straining sense gave way, leaving us as uncertain as before. Yet ever on the haunted ear, now full, now faint, now up, now down, varying, yet incessant, like the roar of ocean, came, over the night-clipt wold, the noise of that multitudinous galloping.

I looked at the resting dog to see how its instinct might explain the matter, but though by its half-raised ears and uneasy air of

vigilance it evidently gave token of alarm, it was impossible to gather further whether the sounds in question were the cause of it; then I glanced at Jannock, who, as he met my eye, remarked, "The buffaloes are having fine shines to-night for sartain; they must have been smartly hunted to keep 'em a gaddin' at this rate. The red-skins will be out pretty rank, I take it, and we may have a hard job to get by them; wull, what was you a-saying now about the lady?"

"I was telling you, Bryce, I once knew a lady who wore one of these ring tokens as a pledge of eternal attachment from her lover; it was a snake, with its tail in its mouth—"

"She must ha' been o' the rattler genius, I reckon, that gal."

"Why, as far as tongue went, she was a rattler, certainly."

"Next o' kin, belike, to Kentucky Dan's wife, whose clapper never stopped till she had screeched herself to death, when the old chap was so j'yed, he paid her a compliment might

ha' served a better mate, by writin' on her gravestun'—"

The speaker stopped, for at that instant there smote our ears a sound that seemed scarce of this world—a yell so frightful and unearthly, that though partly deadened by the distance, it for the moment silenced my companion, and curdled the very blood in my veins with horror.

"Heavens! What can that be, Bryce?"

"By writin' on her gravestun' 'here lies a screamer.' Aye, ye unchristianed imps, I knowed ye was kennelled nigh. What can it be? why, just what I've suspicioned all along; Injyns, aud, what's more, we've nigh run head-foremost into them. They're located, I somethink, in the dingle, higher up, and a massy it is they haven't got our wind; the critters 'll be divertin' themselves with a buffalo feast or scalp dance. That cry sounded uncommon like a scalpin' yell, and I think it comes from Seehoo throats to boot."

Whilst my blood was recovering its wonted

flow, the hunter, resting on his rifle, mused on the fearful interruption for some minutes in silence; then erecting himself, and shouldering his weapon, said with the calm decision that characterized him, "Squire, I must have a peep at the blackguards—see who they are, and what they're arter; if we larn this, we may either make up to or av'id them; if not, we shall be boggling unawares on their track, and finishing our fa'n hunt in a way we've little mind for."

As his resolution seemed taken I did not attempt to alter it, but again volunteered to second him in his new adventure, an offer he at once set aside, with a quiet but peremptory "wouldn't do no ways—sp'il all—better make tracks hum, and when Robin has the watch (don't trust the Frencher to-night), tell the lad to keep his eyes skinned and his hand spry."

With these compendious orders I was fain to return to camp, and my watch having presently expired, threw myself once more on my sheepskin.

CHAPTER X.

THOUGH harassed with anxieties about my comrade, and in momentary expectation of being roused by an Indian on-fall, nature claimed her dues, and I speedily sank into a deep but troubled sleep.

Induced by the dismal impressions made during our late excursion, a villanous dream came over me, repeating its incidents and imagery with a multitude of ephialtic varieties. Again the cry of horror rang in my ears; the 'blood-boltered' form of an Indian warrior approached me with uplifted tomahawk. I felt even the goblin's hand upon my breast,





and awaking with a start of terror was greeted by "Up! up! Lord love ye, squire; ye're as kittle as a young stirk," from the returned and indefatigable Jannock. "We must be up at onst, and steal a morning's march on the Seehoo whilst the dew's on the 'arth, and they're sleepin' off their last night's cram. Robin, lad, put a good lick of grease to the axles, for if they get squeakin', they'll soon set us squeakin' ourselves. I've put a muzzle on the pup, for the fine cretur's a spice too lively; and hark ye, Antoine, you must contrive to stop them lantern 'jaws o' yourn, too, and keep your 'dews' and 'dabbles' inside your throat, unless you want 'em lettin' out through a fresh slit."

It was yet but the first glimmer of the morning twilight when we got under weigh, going off at a bold angle from our former course, and directly away from our wild unacceptable neighbours.

The hunter went on well in advance to choose out and indicate our route, whilst the

remainder of us turned our whole attention to conducting the waggon safely and noiselessly according to his signals.

As the day opened, his figure might be seen looming clearer and clearer against the brightening sky, and at length after three hours' travel, we beheld it come to a standstill in a grassy bottom, which told us the hour had arrived to snatch a hasty, but necessary meal.

Bryce now took the opportunity of giving me a brief account of his over night's reconnaissance.

He had approached, he said, quite close to the Indians' camp, "snaking himself (to use his own words), along the gully till he could have pitched his powder horn into their fire, and made 'em yell agin grain." He pronounced them a war party of Dahcotahs or Sioux,—thirty in number, having with them two prisoners (Delawares, he thought), whom they had been compelling to run the gauntlet to the horrid music that had thrilled us so

drearily during the night. He had got a view of the scene towards its close. The captives had escaped for the time, by their agility, and reached the painted post which gave them safety; indeed Bryce thought there was no present purpose of putting them to death, that the Sioux were merely amusing themselves after their buffalo banquet, and would probably take them to the head quarters of their tribe to await the decision of the general council. "I somethink," remarked he, "I seen one of the lads down east when I was thar years agone, and the Delawares, I know, have tracked west only o' late; they ca'd him 'Peg-top,' did the settlers, and a fine smart copperskin he was; clear grit, too."

"Heigh!" added the hunter, with the vivacity of a bright thought, "if we could only now loose him and his cumrade from their bonds and get them to j'in our party, we'd just be made men, and might laugh at all the Philistines atween here and Bighorn."

I could only reply by a barren wish that Providence might so ordain it.

With our eyes and ears ever turned in the direction of our back trail, we rapidly despatched our food, and then again harnessed our hardy team to lay yet another stage between ourselves and the dreaded Sioux.

After travelling two hours more, by which time the sun had risen some degrees, Jannock and myself, who were riding together in advance, on topping one of the prairie swells, came suddenly upon two buffaloes feeding in the swale below.

Our empty larder ever on our minds we pricked instantaneously in chase, he after one—I after the other, as fast as our ill-fed steeds could be urged. The two animals, which were both females, made off in different directions at the first burst, and absorbed in the pursuit of my own game I soon lost sight once for all of my companion.

Up and down we sped over the rolling plain, the reduced condition of my animal disabling me from doing more than just keeping the quarry in sight, till at length, after a chase of good three leagues it disappeared altogether from view behind one of the countless prairie swells. On reaching this elevation no sign of living thing was to be seen, and though the rank grass that lay in front might readily account for its disappearance, I was altogether at a loss to determine in which direction it had escaped.

Foiled, fatigued, and disheartened, I now felt it needful to retrace my way, and getting off my wearied beast, led it slowly along by the trail rope in the direction I fondly imagined would enable me to strike the trail of my party.

Notwithstanding, however, my experience of the wilderness, I found myself confounded by its sameness, and nearly the whole of the day was spent in wandering over the arid waste, almost deafened by the incessant

"cheep" of grasshoppers, a blazing sun overhead, and a burning thirst rendering both man and horse indifferent to everything but the speediest means of satisfying it.

Evening already approached, and I was beginning to feel something of that anxiety which is apt to beset the wildered traveller, when on reaching one of the innumerable swells around, I perceived standing quietly in the coarse grass about half a mile ahead, the identical animal (as I believe) that I had chased to so little purpose in the morning. Leaping into my saddle I again spurred "Yolande" in pursuit of it.

Though able to get along at but a slow rate, I was not long in perceiving the buffalo (which speedily winded me) was labouring under a similar disability, and to a yet greater degree. My mare, moreover, had some prairie blood in her veins, and made up in bottom what she wanted in speed, so that little by little I began to gain upon the fugitive, and at length drew so near as to be on

the point of levelling my gun for a telling shot, when all of a sudden I beheld her tail and haunches flung up into the air, and the next moment, the entire animal disappear from sight.

It had in fact gone down some hole or precipice which my excitement had prevented me from seeing, and I furthermore felt the immediate and unpleasant conviction that I must inevitably (the interval being too short to admit of reining up) go down after it.

Almost as quickly as the thought, down it we accordingly dashed like lightning—

A headlong plunge—crash, and roll, is all I remember of the ensuing two hours, during which I lay prostrate and insensible in the position I had been so unceremoniously pitched into.

The shock had given me a thorough stunning, but that was all ; and on coming to myself I arose sound in wind and limb, and had moreover the satisfaction of seeing my trusty

steed standing by me, apparently uninjured also.

On the declivity a little above me lay the luckless buffalo, jammed between two fallen trees, and on the point of expiring, with an arrow sticking in its side. From this, I inferred it had been lately hunted by the Indians, and thus received what must have been its virtual death wound.

The place where this mishap had occurred was an extraordinary break in the prairie, which here descended as by a huge step to a lower level. This step or bank was some thirty feet in height, sloping at rather an acute angle, and could be seen, from where I stood, extending for miles and miles along the plain, retaining the same character and elevation, and darkened here and there by patches of lofty timber. It was at one of these wooded spots I had made my descent, getting a few bruises only, from fallen logs, as I did so.

The sun being near to setting as I got up,

I ventured to wind my horn as a signal to Jannock, if perchance he should be within range, of my whereabouts, tho' I did it not without some misgiving the sounds might reach other ears than they were intended for, and then, there being little chance of my re-joining him ere nightfall, I quietly prepared to make my bivouack on the spot.

With this view I set to work to collect some litter of the trees about me, to make my fire of.

Dear bought experience had taught me the habit of constantly travelling with my knapsack on, and profiting by my prudence, I found, at hand, the materials for a supper, and means of cooking it.

The quart tin, that served me for a kettle was filled from an extemporized mud basin, into which I had trained a slender thread of water that oozed from the caked soil at the foot of the bank, and with a cutlet from the buffalo cow, and plenteous draught of tea, I made out a good and renovating meal.

My mare, Yolande, which had for some time shewed symptoms of restlessness, at length attracted my attention, by uttering an unmistakeable moan, and on examining it closely I discovered it had received an injury on its fore leg, and was in a fair way for becoming lame. The knee, I found to be much swollen, and the whole limb indeed suffering from a severe sprain, received, no doubt, in its rude descent into the timber brake. Tho' my situation rendered it a matter of such vital import, I could do little for its relief save by carefully bathing the hurt part, and then, released from harness, leading it to the little spring hard by, there to eat, drink, or rest as it listed. This done, I climbed over the fallen trunks to the higher part of the bank where, stretching myself under a towering cottonwood, and lighting my pipe, I at once enjoyed the solace of repose, and a more leisurely survey of the spacious panorama I commanded.

The wide expanse of prairie had little to

distinguish it from the tracts we had so long been toiling over, save that it bore rather less of the "rolling" character, and was broken in the distance by an isolated "butte" or mound of rather remarkable shape. But at the present time its too familiar features, its wild and waving swells clothed with their rusty herbage to the sky line, with the solitary hill in the distance, and massy timber round about, were gleaming in the light of an almost preternatural looking sunset.

The entire cope of heaven was suffused with the richest crimson, intensifying in brilliancy as it approached the West, till at the very verge of the horizon a wide-stretched luminous streak, like fire, terminated the gorgeous show.

On the broad surface of the plain this fervid coloring was now reflected, steeping its russet herbage in a blood-red glow, tinting the far off peak with halcyon hues, and branding the stems of the trees around me with that lurid

sheen so vividly portrayed in the bandit scenes of Salvatore.

The day's heat mists, condensed by the cooler air, while softening the chromatic splendour of the scene, presented it more dream-like to the senses; whilst the absence of all sounds of life, of all movement, save that of the evening shadows as they crept over the purpling waste from some bolder swell, completed the charmed character of the prospect.

Whilst silently admiring its marvels I could not, however, help feeling my situation was one of perplexity, if not of peril. I was altogether ignorant of the whereabouts of my party, and entertained little hope they would be able to track me through the devious course of my late hunt; it was still less likely I should discover *them*, and the condition of my horse now presented a new, and indeed far the most formidable difficulty.

It was indeed easy to see in its every motion

the animal was becoming dead lame, and, spite of its day's fast, had scarcely the stomach to take a fair nip at its food. Should it be no better on the morrow, what sort of travelling should I make through the untold leagues of grass that lay around me nearly as high as myself?

It was a consideration that seemed to grow in gravity the more I dwelt on it.

To dispel the dreary silence and uneasy feeling it created in me, I seized my horn once more and blew a rousing blast over the plain—a second—then a third, and was on the point of putting by the instrument and laying me down for the night, when—could I have heard aright? Yes; lowly and faintly, but distinctly audible, came the note of an answering bugle, apparently from the distant “butte” in front, but so soft, sweet, and low, that but for my being familiar with the key I might have set it down for one of those ringing murmurs that amuse the ear of a summer's eve. My rueful horse too recognised the sound,

pricked up its ears, and answered the air borne challenge with a sonorous neigh.

There, then, in that certain spot were Robin and Jannock only a few leagues off, and the sense of their propinquity inspired me with renewed cheerfulness. But for what cause, and with what object had they reached a position which lay considerably southward of our route, and but a few hours past was indeed quite invisible? This was a mystery. Might not that horn be some enchanted signal to lure a lost traveller to his doom?

I smiled to myself at the conceit, and, spreading my blanket at the root of the friendly cotton wood, lay down to prepare myself by sleep for the toils and adventures of the morrow.

On arising at early dawn I found the prairie still covered with floating vapour, though the sun through the eastern haze gave promise of a glorious rising.

Wishing to make the most of the cool hours of morning I speedily despatched my break-

fast, and then whistled for my mare, that I might examine her condition for travelling. She came up (for I had brought the creature to a wonderful pitch of docility) limping on three legs, and apparently little the better for her night's rest. This was a grievous disappointment; however, I again bathed the swollen limb, gave her a mouthful of flour and water, and prepared to proceed upon my journey.

After a glance through the spy-glass at the distant "butte" that was to serve me as a landmark, I saddled my unfortunate nag, and led it by its "lariat" on to the grassy plain I was to traverse. Its coarse brown herbage reached above my shoulders, and encumbered as I was with my heavy rifle, knapsack, and the animal, which, even in the path I beat for it, had much ado to get along, my progress was necessarily both slow and toilsome, scarcely indeed averaging more than a mile an hour—a rate at which the short "trajet" threatened to consume the better part of the

day. Intent, however, on effecting it, I trudged resolutely along, forcing my way through the matted grass, and giving many a wistful look at my chief landmark, which from the prevailing thickness of the air seemed ever at a tantalising distance. Every mile or so I found it needful to halt and give my poor beast a short rest, yet even with the most careful management I found its power of progression was gradually abating, whilst many a deep-drawn moan betrayed the painful nature of its exertions.

Persevering still, in spite of all, I succeeded in reaching, about mid-day, a shallow gulley, which, as far as I could judge by the eye, marked somewhat more than half-distance between my starting-point and goal, and here, under a clump of tuft grass that crested the side of the ravine and yielded a scanty shade, I determined to lie by over the sultriest hour of noon.

The saddle was accordingly once more removed from Yolande's back, her leg bathed,

and a sip of water given her from a brackish pool that had survived from the last rains, which done, I was about to throw myself down in utter weariness under my sorry shelter, when the glimpse of a tawny body gliding away over the opposite bank diverted me for the moment from my purpose. I imagined it to be a panther, an animal I had not yet happened to meet with. Quickly snatching up my piece I started off eagerly after it, and had reached the top of the swell, a somewhat higher one than the rest, behind which the creature had disappeared, when a spectacle met my view that brought me to a startled stand, and riveted every sense in the freezing fascination of horror.

The haze that had hitherto filled the air to the southward had deepened into a black portentous loom which stretched East and West beyond the bounds of vision, and had, as I now perceived, already mounted far into the Heavens.

At its base an endless line of fire—brighter

than the noonday splendour, was seen in active play, feeding the fuliginous cloud with fresh vapour, and accounting but too readily for the unnatural thickness of the atmosphere.

Here was expressed in its own appalling characters the warning, so full of dread significance to the Western voyager of "the Prairie on fire!"

It appeared to be yet some miles off—farther so from me on one side than the hill I had been making for (on gaining which I saw at a glance depended my sole chance of preservation) was, on the other.

Yet on foot—through yon dense and pathless grass—under a noontide sun—with a full-blown fire at my heels—my heart for a moment sank at the fearful ordeal I had in prospect. My poor horse too—was I to abandon it? its good and faithful service forbade the thought.

Darting to the spot where it was lying, I raised it with a smart stroke of the whip and

led it to the top of the bank. Just at that moment a herd of antelopes came by, whose panting sides and faltering pace shewed how severely they had been tasked in sustaining their flight for life. Away they sped in front, and profiting by the path they made I pushed on swiftly after them, leading my horse as before by the trail-rope.

The appearance of the fugitives seemed to inspire it with a sympathetic sense of danger, and instead of dragging at its tether as before, it limped along zealously behind me, keeping fairly up with my pace.

The little mount was now, as far as I could judge, about a league distant, and the fire when I discovered it, might have been a little more in the opposite quarter. Fortunately there was yet no wind stirring, and though the grass I passed through resembled so much tinder, I did not despair, with the start I had if my strength should only hold out, of outstripping my nimble foe. Could I but have

snatched one short hour's rest on halting, it would have aided my chance immensely, for the continued march and drag of the morning in an atmosphere like that of an oven, had told severely on my energies, and I was fearful of their failing in the renewed struggle they were to be taxed by. Should they do so, in that rising roar I knew at once my doom, and in that sailing smoke-cloud beheld already stretched—my funeral pall.

Stimulated by the sense of extremity I pushed precipitately onwards, and had now diminished the distance by about two-thirds, when a strange and sudden faintness overcame me. Like the tired swimmer who sinks when almost reaching at the life-buoy, I found myself utterly disabled from making a further effort. A rush of blood as from a sun-stroke, smote my brain; their muscular energies that had hitherto never failed, forsook my limbs; a host of dancing images mocked my vision, and with the sensation of

one ready to yield his last breath I leaned against my gasping beast, and took my silent farewell of nature.

Yet though volition and movement were thus paralysed, there still remained a sort of half-perceptive consciousness. I felt the ground trembling behind me as a herd of buffaloes, frenzied with fear and wrung by prolonged racing overtook and well nigh trampled me under foot; there came under my view the figure of a young calf distanced and deserted by the rest of the herd, drawing up at poor Yolande's side, and with eyes starting from its head, and tongue lolling out, seeking to lull its terror in the strange companionship. Though in such dire extremity myself, I could not help noting and pitying the animal; I felt the force of its dumb appeals, vain as they were, vain even as my own against the unchained fury of the elements.

Now the horrid crackling of the flames broke upon my ears, ever keener and louder, whilst their myriad forks flickered with blast-

ing brilliance against the sooty background; volumes of pungent vapour were propelled into my face, and the air became every moment less respirable.

With the full consciousness of life, but none of its available powers, I surrendered myself to a fate that seemed inevitable, and was inwardly praying that suffocation might forestall the fiercer agonies of a fiery death, when a band of horsemen—giants and centaurs they then seemed to me in their might—burst through the rolling smoke, and hurried by with the headlong speed of desperation.

I had sunk upon the ground as they sped past, their red forms gleaming like burnished copper in the firelight. And were they then all gone? Had my last chance past away? Was there no hand even in that savage throng stretched out to succour and save? Again the roaring of the flames enthralled my senses, already the nearer forks began to scorch, when I felt myself suddenly raised from the earth by a mighty grasp, and the next moment

whirling furiously along in the flight of the fugitive riders.

By this I had partly begun to rally, and now found my arm dragged back by the "lariat" of my limping steed, of which I had still mechanically retained hold. Finding himself distanced by his fellows my deliverer cast a glance behind, and seeing the nature of the impediment at once severed the thong with a swift stroke of his knife, giving me a look as he did so that said as plainly as words, "Do you value your brute above your life?"

I knew it was in vain to plead for the poor beast; crippled as it was, and with two human lives at stake, the sacrifice, however much it grieved me, I felt was unavoidable.

Recovering our place in the train of the flying horsemen, and pursued by the agonized cries of the abandoned animal, we again made good our ground against the fire, though still half stifled by the thick smoke that went before it, till at length a loud exulting yell from the foremost files, followed by a short

rush up a steep ascent, told us we had reached the wished for place of refuge. Scrambling up the acclivity with last and desperate efforts, the hardy beast that bore us soon gained a bare and grassless elevation, that put us out of reach of further danger. The rest of the band were already found drawn up there spent and panting, and gazing as none but those so situated can gaze at the demon they had so narrowly escaped from.

Impelled by a wind that had at last sprung up, and was fast increasing in violence, it had shewn itself no laggard in the chase. On the first glance we gave from our safe-reached citadel we found it had already passed its base, and was rushing with augmented speed on its march of destruction over the prairie.

The savage who had rescued me from the horrid fate I had been threatened with, straightway dismounted from his brave "mustang," and as I did so in my turn, announced himself in the guttural accent of his race as "Wahtogachto—friend of the white man."

CHAPTER XI.

SUCH is the constitution of our nature, that when newly and narrowly escaped from imminent peril, we are apt to overlook or make light of any that may yet remain to be encountered.

Filled with the pleasurable sense of my late deliverance, it did not at first occur to me (what at length forced itself on my mind), that I might have exchanged elemental dangers for others scarce less formidable from the hostile horde (they were evidently Sioux), into whose hands I had fallen.

Such considerations indeed I was yet scarce in frame for entering into.

Stretched on the ground in a sort of lethargic lull, the effect in great part, of my late sunstroke, I could at first do little else than silently watch the progress of the fire, which as the night closed in, laden with louring vapour, presented on the plain below a spectacle of rare sublimity.

Advancing with a speed that rivalled the rush of cavalry the flaming flood rolled onward, till the herbage in its rear being consumed, and the play of the forks more indistinguishable, a mere distant line of light with its lurid reflection on the heavens, and here and there some smouldering glow in hollows where the vegetation had been ranker, were at length all the traces that remained of it.

By that time it had worn far on into the night, and yielding to the drowsiness upon me, I at last closed my eyes, as many a hardier wight had done before, on this last scene of

the wild and exciting drama in which I had been an actor.

On being aroused next morning by the dazzling sun, I found the Sioux band already risen, and gathered in a sort of council round their chief, which I felt an instinctive conviction had some relation to myself.

They had forbore from disturbing me so long as my slumbers lasted, but as soon as he saw I was in motion, Wahtogachto came up to me with a grave salute, and addressed me thus:—"My brother has slept heavily. He has had a hard race with the prairie fire; but he is now safe and rested, and Wahtogachto is well pleased. Let him look at my Dahcota braves; they too have had to fly and beat the flames. Can he tell why their brows look dark? why they rejoice not either in rest or safety? let him try."

The Sioux paused—crossed his arms upon his breast, and looked at me with an eye full of meaning.

Receiving no answer to his appeal, he pro-

ceeded in an altered tone:—"My white brother has found my people too many on his path,—he has taken them for deer and buffaloes, and shot them to air his shooting iron. Were the Dahcotahs foes, that he should have done this? Has Wahtogachto shewn himself an enemy, that he has shot down his braves like wild beasts? My young men have found blood—the blood of their kindred upon the grass, and their hearts have got hot with looking at it. They call out for pale-face blood to wash it out, and Wahtogachto knows not what to answer them."

It was easy to gather from this address and the peculiar air with which it was delivered, that mischief had been brewed in some way between our respective parties; that blood had been shed on one side, and revenge was being meditated on the other—a circumstance every way unfortunate, and one which it was easy to see portended serious trouble to myself. Urged therefore alike by truth and policy, I

gave a strenuous denial to his charges, so far as they concerned myself, and apparently with some effect, but when I proceeded to defend my comrades, he at once cut short my pleading, by calling up an aged warrior, who had been gloomily watching our conference, to give his testimony on the matter.

Though the guttural jargon in which he did so was necessarily quite unintelligible to me, the looks and gestures that accompanied it sufficiently explained his meaning, and the expressive clutch of his tomahawk with which he wound up his speech, plainly conveyed what, in his mind, was its natural and needful sequel.

Turning to me with the same impassive gravity as before, though shewing in his dark eye something of the angry glitter that lighted that of his witness, the Sioux chief continued:—"My white brother has heard the words of the 'Aged Cottonwood'—he has heard how his son has fallen by the bullets of the short hunter; he was his only child—the

prop of his old age, but he is gone, and his spirit calls for a pale-face ghost to clear its path to the land of spirits. My brother, too, has heard how the Delaware dogs have been let loose, and found shelter under the rifles of the white men ; their rifles can carry far, Wahtogachto knows it well, but (and here his Indian vindictiveness broke out), the arms of the Dahcotah can reach further ; they will catch these Delawares yet, and take vengeance on the strangers who have stolen them."

Pausing awhile to repress his rising ire, he concluded.

"Enough ! my brother has not raised his hand against my braves, or helped our prisoners to run away ; the Dahcotah will still look upon him as their friend, and rely on his aid in getting revenge. I have spoken."

The Teton chief had spoken, and on his will and word my fate depended, but I did not feel my hopes much raised, or my position rendered clearer by his oration. On the

contrary, there was a peculiar expression in his eye as he uttered his last words, which seemed to belie their apparent friendliness, and intimate that if I did not join in his people's plans, of retaliation against my friends, I should supply them with the needed victim in myself.

This I became the more assured of as I watched the bearing of the other Indians, who were gathered under the lee of the 'butte,' in stern debate, and whose faces beneath the brightening day yet wore the moody looks which told how the disasters referred to by their leader, had affected them.

After finishing their consultation, and snatching a hurried meal of raw meat, supplied by some of the more provident of the party, preparations were made for departure with an earnestness and haste seldom exhibited by these stoics of the desert.

There was indeed high need that we should move, for around the saving height from which we viewed it, spread the black and

blasted plain, devoid of a particle of sustenance for man or beast, and threatening assured destruction, by thirst or famine, unless we should speedily succeed in crossing it.

The half-wild horses, which had already saved us from the fire, were still our sole reliance for the purpose, yet it was too much to be feared their condition would not be equal to the additional toil required of them.

After the incredible exertions of the day before not a drop of water had been found for their refreshment, which, like our own, was necessarily limited to a simple rest during the night on the hill-top, when the fervid air enveloping us was found least oppressive.

Whilst sitting apart after my conference with Wahtogachto, meditating on these and kindred matters, two of his warriors came up to me, and, uttering some unintelligible words, proceeded, though in civil fashion, to relieve me of my rifle, knife, and pistol ; they then invited me to share their uncooked meal,

which, out of courtesy to them, as well as justice to myself, I deemed it advisable to do. A horse, the sorriest, as it seemed, of the lot, was then assigned me, and the entire band, swart, sullen, and desperate, descended, something like the infernal spirits who had "sat on a hill apart," described by Milton, on to the "burning marl" we had to traverse.

It was not exactly burning, either, for the fire, save in the more thickly herbage'd bottoms, had had its hour, and was passed away; but a tract of depressive blackness, where "life seemed to have died and death to live," and where for an unknown length of time we should be doomed to travel, destitute of food and water, and supported only by our own individual instincts and endurance.

Though virtually a prisoner, or at the least hostage, among this band of thirty savages, I could not but admire the undaunted spirit which, hour after hour, sustained them in their weary march, and the astonishing sagacity which, unhelped by compass or calcula-

tion, led them towards the point where alone relief seemed to be hoped for.

Scaling one scorched swell after another, and threading many a darksome swale, we journeyed on till noon, oppressed by the wide-spread desolation.

Water was what we were making for—this my own feelings told me—water somewhere, water alone. Celestial Hope itself took the form and attributes of a water-nymph. Yet noon arrived, and when sore fatigue of man and beast enforced a temporary rest under the partial shadow of the bank of an old water-course, its fire-scorched stones alone, too hot even for our horses to stand upon, were all it offered us, paraded by the blazing sun in apparent mockery of our cravings.

Getting again, therefore, into the saddle, we proceeded, silent and suffering, on our way, till our shadows began to lengthen on the ground, and the stumbling of our wither-wrung steeds showed the necessity of again granting them rest.

Once more then we drew rein on a rugged brake—the channel of some former prairie flood—destitute, like the last, of the precious fluid we were wanting, and bearing on its grisly sides the yet glowing ashes of its late verdure.

Releasing the gasping animals from their trappings the Indians quickly spread themselves along its bed, in the vain hope of finding some secret pool, which however, foul and brackish might slake the intensity of their thirst.

This, fire and drought forbade—their quest being in every case quite fruitless.

Suffering, myself as much as the rest, but deterred by sundry hints from Wahtogachto from taking part in their explorations, I beheld them return sullen and disappointed, and as they bestowed themselves on the ground for their night's rest, I could gather but small encouragement in the dark discontented looks that everywhere met my own.

Night at length fell—veiling for awhile

the deformities of the blackened earth, and yielding relief at least from two main sources of our day's suffering, the oppressive glare of the sun and excessive weariness.

Cheering my mind as well as might be, by the contemplation of the fresh and lovely vault above, where Hope in its myriad spheres seemed still to dispense its solacements, I sank at last to sleep with a trust still firm in Providence.

Next morning, long ere sunrise the party were again in motion, gathering in their spiritless horses, and anxious, as it seemed by their movements, to make the most of the cool hours of early dawn in accomplishing what remained of our tristful and trying pilgrimage.

The bits of hide that served for saddles were quickly placed on the poor creatures' backs, and chewing the while morsels of dried buffalo meat, the hardy savages mounted for what was hoped would be the last stage we had to make.

The march began with an evil omen. The horse of the leading Sioux had not taken more than a dozen steps, when, either spent in sheer exhaustion, or stung by some smouldering ember, it fell with its rider to the ground, rolling heavily upon him.

Wahtogachto was taken up insensible, and it was found necessary, when we proceeded, to support him on horseback by a stout Indian on either side.

To me indeed the accident was something more than an evil omen, for in the Sioux chief I had possessed, and now lost, my only safeguard against the openly uttered menaces of the truculent horde he had headed rather than commanded. Hiding these thoughts within my breast, and preserving a cheerful look, I rode my sorry jade among the rest, keeping as near as possible to the scarce conscious chief, till from certain exclamations among the leading horsemen, and more sprightly air of our animals, I inferred we were approaching a spot where we should

find the blessed element we were in search of, and terminate our trials for the time.

Though these anticipations proved correct, it took us nearly an hour longer (more, almost, than our tired out cattle could well wear through) ere they were realized by our reaching a noble stream whose breadth had availed to check the conflagration, and secure its native verdure (how eagerly our eyes gloated on it) to the further bank.

No sooner did our faltering beasts sight it, than defying all attempts to restrain them, they rushed tumultuously into the water, where seeking out the deepest parts, they wallowed and drank, and drank and wallowed till indulgence even threatened as fatal consequences as the pressing want it satisfied.

Nor was it indeed much otherwise with their masters, though at length, like their dumb associates, after allaying their raging fever and burning thirst, they drew slowly by twos and threes to the opposite side, myself among the rest; when, throwing me down upon the

grass, I poured out my secret gratitude to Heaven for this last and timely preservation.

After indulging themselves for some hours in the rest they had so dearly earned, the Sioux held a consultation to determine on the course to be taken with reference to their disabled chief.

Shortly after it had ended, the greater part of the band gathered in their horses, and placing Wahtogachto on the quietest, supported as before by two able sidesmen, took their way across the prairie, leaving but seven of their comrades, together with myself, under the inauspicious command of the "Old Cottonwood."

I watched them depart with a misgiving spirit, for with them went "the friend of the white man," and turning to the others who remained, I read everything in their lowering brows and malign glances to confirm the suspicions I had formed of their foul and sinister purposes. Something of that mysterious instinct that warns the victim steer of the neigh-

bouring slaughter-house, gave me its secret surety that the crisis of my fate was approaching; that from the hands of these eight Dahcotahs (the worst favored by far of the band), I was about to meet my death, perhaps suddenly and treacherously dealt, perhaps prolonged in torments, and I internally formed the resolution of attempting at all hazards to escape.

A little below that part of the bank where we were stationed, stretched a long low island, clothed with a fair green herbage, the product of constant irrigation; and here the horses of the band had been driven, partly to afford them better pasturage and partly also as an additional security against their straying; if I could only reach these animals undiscovered, and succeed in mounting that I had marked out as fleetest, the chances would be somewhat in my favor of giving my dangerous mates a final slip. It was the only means of doing so that presented itself, and not knowing what the next minute might bring forth, it was with no

little anxiety I awaited a favorable opportunity for my purpose.

Late in the afternoon, when the shadow of the low prairie bank lay broad upon the stream, several of the Dahcotahs being absent hunting, and the three remaining engaged in kindling a fire for their night's camp, I deemed the wished for moment had arrived, so leaving the best part of my clothes within their view to allay any suspicion of my purpose, stripped in fact to my shirt and hat (the latter rendered necessary by the effects of the "coup de soleil"), under pretence of bathing, I quietly entered the water, swam about for a time within sight of my guards, and then taking heart of grace, struck away stealthily but strongly under the bank towards a sort of cape that would cover my further approach to the cattle. This was speedily reached, and partly hid by its fringe of reeds I ventured to take a last look round ere leaving their shelter to make the final push for the Sioux herd.

My first glance was towards the group I had left at the camp fire; here all remained as I had left it, and nerved by the prospect of escape I was upon the point of dashing across the shallow stream towards the animals on which it depended, when a shadow passed between me and the bright sunshine I was about to turn from, and at but a few paces off, with bow already bent and arrow aimed, rose the hateful figure of the "Old Cottonwood."

Step by step, no doubt, with sleepless eye he had dogged me along the bank as I swam down, gloating on his approaching feast of vengeance; and now, deeming the hour arrived, he remained for a few moments regaling himself characteristically with its foretaste.

Rage was largely mingled with my astonishment at beholding this baleful apparition, and in my broad brimmed hat and dripping shirt I stood gazing at him after a fashion, that had he had any humanity about him would have quenched his atrocious purpose in a hearty fit of laughter. But far was the

mirthful mood from the temper and intents of the old Cottonwood. What he craved for was a victim, and that victim to present a good broad mark for his arrow : here he had both (as it would seem) to his mind.

I have said he paused for a moment to enjoy the anticipation of his revenge ; it was one of those providential pauses that so often relieve us of the cup of evil when almost at our lips, and in the present case it availed to reverse our respective dooms.

Seeing how certain was my fate remaining where I was, I darted towards the bank to engage the fell sagittary at close quarters. It was about a yard in height, and only a few paces from me, but the water—mid thigh deep—greatly impeded my advance, and I was yet but with my knee upon the grass in the act to rise, when the bow, which in the gratification of his torture-loving tastes had been often drawn, and as often unbent, was stretched once more with murderous aim,

the shaft it held being pointed, close almost to touching it, against my breast.

The freezing conviction passed across me that, baffled by time, I should feel it the next instant quivering in my vitals, when the sharp crack of a rifle sounded from the islet shore; the arrow that was to have drawn my life blood sung idly and erring over the water, and the savage who had aimed the vengeful missile—stricken by one more fatal—fell dead, almost into my arms as I arose.

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE yet scarce freed from his unwelcome weight, a voice, proceeding apparently from the herd of horses opposite, saluted me in these words:

“This a-way, Squire, this a-way; over the water, and spry at that, or you’ll get skewered yet; the critters are crowdin’ down to cut you off.”

A thrill of joy passed through me as I recognized the voice of Jannock, and hailed his unerring aim. Snatching the knife of my dead adversary from his belt, I instantly dashed into the stream and made towards the sturdy

figure which at length presented itself at the islet end.

He was quietly re-charging his weapon as I got up, cast a brief, scrutinizing glance at my hat as he gave me a cheerful nod, and remarked, "A close shave, squire, rayther a close shave. Range so'thin' long for an old man's arm; but you'll float yet, I'm thinkin'; no matter for short fixen (smiling at my scanty drapery) when the timbers is sound. Now, as we're so'thing' underhanded for our work, hie ye away and help the Delawares yonder (pointing to two strange Indians who were busily engaged in the midst of the Sioux herd) in getting in the mustangs, while I keep these ragamuffins to their own side o' the creek."

In obedience to his instructions I lost no time in giving what assistance I could to the two friendly natives, who were still struggling with the four prime animals they had seized, and by our united efforts they were ere long eventually secured.

Whilst thus employed we were aroused by another report, and turning round beheld two of the three Dahcotahs I had left by the camp fire, awakened to their danger, running along the opposite bank to attempt the rescue of their cattle, whilst a dark, moving object in the water showed that the remaining one had committed himself to the stream with the same object, and thus exposed himself to Jannock's fire. It seemed, too, to have taken effect upon him, for simultaneously with the discharge the savage, throwing his arms wildly into the air, immediately sank from sight.

"That fellow's rubbed out, at any rate," exclaimed I.

"I suspicion not. He was on his back, and there was too little of him out to touch the life; he's only barked, if that, and will play us some rogue's trick yet afore we've done with him."

Whilst reloading his piece he inquired how many of the Sioux had been left on their separation; I told him the number. "That'll

do then; we've scomfished one at any rate, and the rest are too few to try a rush on us."

Whilst we were thus talking, a loud yell was heard from the other end of the island, and the four horses it had not been thought worth while to secure, were seen dashing across the water towards the hostile bank, stampadoed by the venturous swimmer I had thought killed by Jannock's shot.

"Aye," observed Bryce, "that's just the very thing I was lookin' for; well, we've got the pick o' the lot, and he's welcome to the lumber; now, as there's nothing further to fight about, we'll up and away, while the play's good and the light lasts."

It so happened that at this moment the warrior whose hardihood we were commenting on conceived the unlucky idea of celebrating his achievement by a yell of triumph.

This was too much for Bryce's philosophy, who might besides have been somewhat galled at the failure of his late attempt.

The Indian was seated on one of the animals he had re-captured, and about two hundred yards from us, his body in full view, and evidently from the distance believing himself in perfect safety. Muttering a half-suppressed oath, our hunter levelled his piece with unusual care, and the next instant the presumptuous Sioux paid the forfeit for his uproar by dropping from the animal's back.

"I've only 'creased' the critter arter all," remarked Bryce, with one of his collar laughs, "but it'll stop his screeching any how, and make him less handy at horse thievin'."

Taking warning by their comrades' discomfiture, the Dahcotahs now sought cover, and as every consideration on our own side counselled immediate departure, we mounted (with the two friendly Indians, so mysteriously recruited,) the four fine mustangs we had captured, and crossed the further arm of the stream, on to the burnt plains we had so lately and gladly quitted.

Jannock led, and so great was the necessity

of making rapid progress, that as long as the day light lasted, but little conversation passed between us; even the information so anxiously desired by me about the rest of our party being waived by our leader with silent gestures or monosyllabic replies.

About an hour, however, after night had fallen, a halt was called, and a general council held (in which the Delawares joined), to consider the most effectual course to be taken for eluding the pursuit of our late foes (possibly reinforced from the main body), and regaining our camp.

To retrace the weary traverse we had already made, was mentioned only to be set aside as ensuring the destruction both of horse and man, reduced as they were by their former hardships, and but half recruited by their late rest.

It was decided, therefore, as the only other course left us, to make a forced march in the form of a curve over the devastated tract (in order to mislead our enemies), which would

bring us again to the river a good way farther up, when, crossing to the unburnt bank, we might find both forage for the cattle and food for ourselves, while pushing our way on for the waggon station.

This d  tour it was needful to perform during the night, in order to prevent the Sioux from taking up our trail too early, and we therefore lost no time in executing it.

The nights had now become sharp, and my equipment being much lighter than was comfortable, I availed myself of an offer kindly made me by Jannock, of his blanket, by way of amending it.

Picking our way over the sable ground as well as the faint light from the stars, and practised optics of our allies enabled us, we diligently journeyed on till a little before dawn, when we again drew rein, and waited till the increasing light should give us better knowledge of our bearings. Remounting at sunrise, it was not long ere our eyes were

gladdened by the sight once more of the water, for which we made direct, that our horses might take the refreshment they were again greatly in need of. The further side as before shewing a fair growth of herbage, we passed at once across to it, and indulged the enduring animals with a feed of several hours.

Though able to quench our thirst from the source at hand, we were all suffering much from hunger, which we had had for days no means of appeasing, save by some odds and ends of dried buffalo meat, and we accordingly sent off our red allies on to the prairie to try if they could pick off one of these animals (of which signs had been seen during the morning), with their arrows. Jannock, for some reason, declined to share their labour, and refused with true backwood jealousy, to let his rifle quit his hands.

The hunt fortunately proved productive, and in little more than a couple of hours they

rejoined us with a welcome load of wild beef, on which we lost no time in doing due execution.

Taking up our march in more cheerful guise along the unscathed bank, we stedfastly continued it till noon, when a tuft of middle-sized cotton-woods presenting itself, we took advantage of its shade to rest once more, and consult as to the further direction to be pursued.

After turning out our animals to feed, taking another hearty tug at the buffalo meat, and posting one of the Indians on a neighbouring rise as sentinel, my trusty comrade and myself stretched ourselves on the sloping bank, and sharing his pipe in turn (my own had been lost during my late mishaps), entered upon the explanations so long deferred, and so anxiously desired by each of us.

"There," said he, tendering me the replenished tube, "that's the sort o' thing when natur' feels like caving in; when I seed you led off from the butte, t'other morning,

by them cut-throat Seehoo, I wouldn't ha' given that pipe o' baccy now for all inside your red flannel shirt."

"Why, you don't mean to say you *did* see me on that occasion?"

"Ask Peg-top there whether we didn't; and knowing what had passed atween them and us, I feared it was the last sight I should ha' gotten o' ye. If it hadn't been for him and his long comrade yonder, I quest'on whether Truegroove could ha' made his v'ice heerd in the matter to any purpose. Even with them and the Seehoo hosses to boot (for it's these, arter all, we're most obligated too), it was a mighty close shave, I tell you; that beaver o' yourn won't turn water again so soon, I'm thinkin'."

Moved by the hunter's speech and peculiar look that accompanied it, I took off the article alluded to, and there, sure enough, right through the upper part was seen the plain perforation of a rifle ball!

The truth of its being a "close shave"

became at once forcibly, and I may add far from pleasantly, impressed upon me. Well (thought I to myself), Bryce, you are a "thorough-going". friend with a vengeance, and your balls, I may say, are no bad type of yourself. Bryce regarded me steadily as I examined the somewhat startling evidence of his shaving powers, and as he divined my thoughts, said, with the slightest possible trace of humour in his eye:

"Rayther too near the hair, you're a thinkin' belike. Well, I had to mind my hind sights, that's a fact, but I was sure o' the old ir'n, ne'ertheless, and can still hit a deer atween the eyes at a hundred yards. Then there warn't no two ways about it, you'll consider; I couldn't ha' dropped the creatur' no way else, you covered him so; and, arter all, squire," wound up the hunter, with an appeal to my candour quite irresistible; "you must acknowledge that a bullet thro' your beaver's better than a yardwand thro' your lights."

Against such close shaving and close rea-

soning combined there was no possibility of replying, and I accordingly thanked my thorough-going friend with a gravity becoming the occasion.

I had now finished my pipe (who can tell the value of this luxury but those who like ourselves have puffed its incense on the desert air?), which Jannock took up and filled in his turn.

After giving a few whiffs he desired me to relate to him what had befallen me since we separated, which I accordingly did with all due particularity, when, after asking a few questions as to dates and places, he proceeded to narrate the adventures that had fallen to his own share.

"Wull, by your tell," he began, "that bufflo o' yourn has led you a pretty dance, but the devil himself and all his angels seemed to ha' got aboard that I follered.

"Arter chasing it for the best part of an hour I got so riled that, I swore I would see it down, or it should see me. Well, I think

it must ha sworn the same, and with better warrant too, for it led me into as nice a mess afore we parted as ever mortal boggled into. Now and then, arter a long stretch, to show it had the heels of me, it would stand stock still as if ready to give out, when I would get off my horse, and steal up for a shot; then as I got within levelling distance away it would streak again through the long grass, like a flash of greased lightnin'; then poor Cocktail would feel it had had enough of the sport, and give me no end o' trouble to catch him again, when we would foller on the heifer's tracks to find it, may be, feeding a mile ahead, ready to play the same shines over again.

"So in this way we carried on till past noon, when I found I had drawn quite nigh our overnight's camp on the gulley, and my poor jade was so blown I was thinkin' o' giving up the hunt arter topping the next swell, when, on getting there, as ill luck would have it, right afore me—nearer than ever, lay the bedlam bufflo—squat on the

ground, as if it had now fairly knocked under.

"Well, thinks I, I've got you down at last, my sweetheart, and spurred my nigh-spent hoss for a last rush at it. I could scarce believe my eyes, when the critter sprung up as spry as ever, and in three minutes dived head-long down into the gulley with myself hard at its heels. The bank being steep and rough, proved too much for poor Cocktail, who, on reaching the bottom, fell like so much pump water, rolling me over with him.

"This happened nigh the Seehoo camp, and I had barely time to pick up myself and Truegroove, when I caught a blink of some redskins down the creek, who had heerd the crash and came running up with a yell.

"As there was no possibility of raising Cocktail in time to save him, I started back up bank, to get clear myself, if I could, in the long grass of the praira swales. It struck me, however, as I climbed it, there would be little chance of this with the inimy so close behind,

and I therefore, detarmined to turn short to the right along the creek edge, where there was a sprinklin' o' bushes, and snake towards the Seehooquarters where there would be least likelihood of their follerin' me. You may think I had little ch'ice, when I did this, but I partly reckoned, as it indeed fell out, the warriors would be mostly away after the bufflo, and by being nearest the fire I should stand least chance of getting smoked, as they say, until at nightfall I might dodge my way back again.

“ Well, I had crept along for about a rifle shot, when I found myself right over the camp I had spied into the night afore, and there, the first thing as caught my eye were the two Delawares lying on the ground tethered hand and foot. Eh, Peg! (addressing the native who sat with us, and to whom he had handed his pipe) you didn't think then you would be smoking the calumet so soon with your white friends.

“ The camp, as I suspicioned, was nigh de-

sarted, for being a war party there were no women or papooses hangin' about it. A single Dahcotah lay nigh the prisoners, left as guard, but he seemed either half asleep or at any rate not to have heerd his cumrades' outcry.

"Seeing the coast so clear, a sudden thought came across me that if I could only set free these two captyves, besides doing a good turn to old fri'nds (for, as I have said, I partly knowed 'em afore), my chance would be mainly bettered of getting a fair offing myself. So I detarmined, being in a fix every way, to try the thing off hand, and strike a bold stroke for the whull on us. Whetting my knife on my moccasin, I stole down the bank into the gulley and snaked myself thro' the brush to where Peg here was lying, who, the 'cute old coon, kept as still as a log, just watching me thro' the tail of his eye as I came on. The Seehoo was lolling by his fire with his back to us, so I quietly cut Peg's thongs and put my pistol in his hand, signing him to keep his eye on the sluggard; then I crept on to Swift-

foot, cut his lashings and guv' him my knife. V'ices was now heerd nigh at hand, the drowsy guard began to rouse himself and rub his eyes, but afore he could well open them or raise wind for a yell the long Delaware was upon him, and sent him with a single stroke to his everlastin' sleep.

“ Well, you may be sure it was all neck or nothing with us now. Picking up the Seehoo's bow and arrows away darted Swiftfoot up the gulley side, then Pegtop, then me, and we had got about a hundred yerds upon the praira when out rung the inimy's yell over the dead body of the sleeper. Now was the pinch, life or death for us in the next few minutes. Stoop-
ing low among the grass we pushed smartly along towards a branch creek, where we hoped to find a hidin' place for the night. This by good luck we reached, and were just stowing ourselves in a spot that offered a likely 'cache,' when three of the buffalo hunters came in sight, soon spied us, and dropping the meat from their beasts came galloping

and whooping up. Being only man for man we didn't doubt but we could deal with them, and if there had been ten times as many we had nothing left but to fight it out, as there war'nt no massy to be looked for on our side.

"So, crouching down under the bank which partly sheltered us from arrows, and offered a rest for our shootin' ir'ns, we waited till they came up—quite chipper like—and then let fly about ten paces off.

"Truegroove dropped his game as a matter o' coorse, Peg with his long pistol unsaddled another, tho' he crept away arterwards among grass, and the third seeing how matters went with his mates turned tail, when Swiftfoot running up secured the two hosses in a twinklin'; he and Peg got on to one, I on the other, and we now determined instead of hiding to try if we could save our hair by our horse-flesh.

"Providence stood our fri'nd that night if ever it did, for tho' on topping a swell

now and then we could see the Seehoo in pursuit, our hosses' mettle kept us well ahead of them, and finally carried us out of eyeshot. I reckon their critters had been worn out with hunting, for your redskins ride like devils, and ourn were the fresher or may be had the better bottom of the two.

"But where to go next was still a knotty question, for they would foller on the foot trail to a sartainty, and to make straight to camp would ha' been to bring the whull pack o' ragin' wulves upon you and Robin, which was a thing not to be thought on, so I states my complexity," said Bryce, filling his pipe again and drawing a long breath, "to Swiftfoot, who promised if I would only keep the matter dark to take me to a spot where, with a piece like 'Truegroove' we might keep the whull Seehoo nation at bay, or if we liked it better might 'cache' under their very noses and never be seen. Wull, Squire, where d'ye think now it was? In three hours after we drawed up at the Butte.

"As we was settin on the top about sundown, with all our eyes about us, I fancied I heerd your horn, and though it was a risky thing to do at the time I thought it would be no more than neighbour like to give you an answerin' blast. So I blowed my best, tho' I'm so'thing in a wonderment too you should have heerd it at the big timber brake. It makes me larf yet when I think o' the wry faces Pegtop pulled as he heerd me buglin'.

"Wull, arter swearin' me again not tell (and you're none the nearer to 'em for anything I've said), Swiftfoot showed me his hiding places, places you would never ha' thought on or found if you had searched till doomsday, and which I reckon none but these wanderin' Delawares who, poor critters, are often hard set for shelter, are at all acquaint wi'; and here we were all snugly 'cached' when Wahto and his vagabonds gallopped up with you among 'em and the fire hard at your heels.

"I seed you more than onst during the

night, and would fain have struck a blow to get you free, but it would ha' been altogether too risky and done more harm than good ; so as soon as you rode off in the morning we quietly follered on your trail (a weary spell we had on't ; well might poor Steve say it was 'downing' work), snaked up under cover of the Seehoo hosses, and got within shot—the Lord be thanked !—just in time to stop that old red atomy from ticketing you off for the next world.

“ Look at that critter, Peg, how grave and unconcerned he sits, as if he'd had neither art nor part in the business, instead of pickin' out the sign for us from first to last. He says he was raised down East on the head waters of the Hudson nigh five and fifty summers ago, when his people might be told by thousands, and syne then he has been druv and baited by the Yankees, him and his'n, step by step here away West among the hoss Injyns, where I suspicion they've but hard times on it, every man's hand being agin them. The whites

gav him the name of Pegtop from some throaty Injyn name they thought it sounded like. Swiftfoot yonder is a younger man, and has a dash of the Mohawk in his blood. The down-easters have been too smart for him too, and arter giving him his name from his speed, have sent him like poor Peg to practyce his paces on the praira. They've been hunting together now for five years past they tell me, and if we can only get 'em to take on with us, as I partly think we may, I don't stick to say they'll be worth half a dozen at least of any of your rowdy v'y'gers."

END OF VOL. I.

Ruysdale, Philip

A PILGRIMAGE OVER THE
PRAIRIES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FORTUNES OF A COLONIST."

VOL. II

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A

PILGRIMAGE OVER THE PRAIRIES.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING thus footed up our respective doings to the present time, we indulged ourselves with an hour or two of sweet repose, and then getting again across our beasts continued our journey along the river side towards the point where it was proposed to strike off from it in search of the waggon.

Any hope we might entertain of its having escaped the fire, rested on the presumed ex-

perience of the half breed, Antoine, and was necessarily so vague that we all laboured under much anxiety about its fate.

Our hunt, too, after the buffaloes, together with the long southward march with the Indians, had taken us such a distance from the spot where we left it, that no little uncertainty and considerable difference of opinion prevailed as to its present whereabouts.

After travelling the remainder of the day and best part of the next up stream, by which time we had reached, as we imagined, the proper point for the purpose, it was resolved to quit the river altogether, and make our experimental cast for head quarters.

Ere doing so, however, a short halt was called; the Indians were again sent off for a supply of food, while Bryce and I, having hobbled and turned out the horses, discussed over a pipe of negrohead the "pros" and "cons" of the step we were about to take

The hunters by and bye made their appearance, having met with no success, but Peg-

top made a communication to Jannock, which induced the latter to resolve on continuing awhile longer our course by the water side.

"That critter Peg," remarked he, as we remounted our animals, "tells me he has seen mule droppings in the water, and knowing what Injyn eyesight is, and his in particklar, I consider it worth our while to try it up a bit further."

As the sun was about to drop below the wavy line of prairie horizon, Swiftfoot, who had been scouting in advance, came hastily up and made the important announcement that he had discovered a "white camp" a little more than a mile ahead.

This information put new life into all of us, and Bryce and I eagerly followed our intelligencer to assure ourselves of the truth of his report.

On nearing the point in question we found the river expanded to nearly double its former width, enclosing a marshy island thickly set

with reeds, and in the middle of this appeared an object certainly never placed there by nature, but of which the true character was at first sight undistinguishable. Ere, however, I had well time to reconnoitre it, Bryce siezed me by the arm, and, his eyes brimming with silent humour, pointed my attention some little distance to the left, where, sitting under the bank, with a knife in one hand and biscuit and bacon in the other, was seen the figure of my attached but dejected henchman, Robin Hood.

For the moment he was resting from his masticatory labours, and apparently absorbed in thought.

"My shootin' ir'n," whispered Bryce, "agin his shot pouch, he's wishin' he was at hum this very moment, eatin' his dinner in the harvest field."

"Or musing peradventure on the charms of the white-skinned Hannah."

"Or wonderin' belike when master will come back. Lord! where would he be now

with three blood-thirsty Seehoo on his trail ; it's a massy they've never struck it. Peg, lad ! snake up thro' the grass, and rouse him to like with a hallo ! ”

Entering into his comrade's humour the Indian threw himself upon the ground, and presently the Delaware war-whoop sounded in the ears of the astonished penseroso.

For an instant he remained rooted to where he sat with the surprise, then down dropped biscuit and bacon, and ere we had well time to look about us, whiz came a rifle bullet close to our ears.

“Down, Squire, down,” cried Jannock, chuckling with mirth, “or, egad, you'll get another hole thro' your tile, he's got his long pistol yet, mind. Who would have thought the youngster had been so spry ? Hey, Robin, lad ! ” cried the hunter.

“Why, Hood ! ” shouted I.

“Is this the way you welcome your frinds hum again,” sniggered Bryce.

"Put down your piece, Robin, and—"

"And get up the bread and pork, man," quo' Jannock, as seeing him comply we at last went up, "it don't do to waste good wittles in the wilderness."

The deep bay of the bloodhound was now heard from the midst of the reeds, roused by the report of the shot, and led by the rejoicing Robin, we soon had the pleasure of greeting him, together with the derelict and disconsolate Antoine.

It appeared from their narration, that on our starting after the possessed buffalo cows, they had waited some time for our return, and then in accordance with general orders, proceeded forwards in the prescribed line till they should meet with water. This was not done till late the same evening, the camping place being but little distant from where we eventually found them. Here, while awaiting our arrival, the following day they had discovered the approach of the fire in time

fortunately, to shift the waggon and mules to the marshy island near, where they had succeeded in braving the danger without damage.

The tilt of the vehicle had been taken off to avoid detection by the Indians, and we now had the satisfaction of finding both it and its contents as we left them, with the exception of a very perceptible diminution in the eatables.

This, however, was forgiven our followers, in consideration of the good service they had rendered in saving all besides.

With a feeling of infinite gratification, I now gave myself a new rig out, my old one having, as before recorded, been reduced (so far as regarded my own lawful property) to simply my shirt and hat.

For arms (my good rifle having been taken by the Indians) I appropriated the double barrel that had hitherto been attached to the waggon, and restoring Bryce (who had a natural partiality for his long tried weapons) the pistol he had lent Pegtop, armed the

latter and his brother Delaware with those, equally good, we had provided for exigencies of this sort. These with St. Louis knives and their own bows and arrows, furnished an equipment that both for hunting and warfare, was perhaps the most suitable that could be given them.

Not knowing but that the Sioux, with the vengeful pertinacity of their nature, might still be following up our trail, we thought it prudent not to linger where we were longer than was necessary to recruit ourselves and cattle (*i.e.* such of the latter as had shared our later toils) for the continuance of our journey. On the day after our re-union, therefore, we reharnessed our now well-rested mules, and dragging the waggon up the western bank, resumed our progress in the direction of the Black Hills.

Retarded by the huntings, haltings, and misadventures hereinbefore described, as well as the increasing difficulties of the country, which had become rough and broken, we were

yet some distance from these landmarks, though it was already the middle of October, and the sharpness of the nights impressed us forcibly with the necessity of making the best use of our time if we wished to reach the rocky mountains ere the snow fell.

The state of our travelling gear, however, now drew our attention, and gave us cause for apprehension it might scarcely be able to hold out so long

Such is the excessive dryness of the atmosphere in the elevated region we had now attained, that the wood work of our waggon was cracked in every part, and the wheels become so crank and rickety that after journeying for about a week, to avoid dissolution of the vehicle we were compelled to lie by for two days at a pleasant station on the river called Laramy's Fork, in order to effect repairs.

This was done by securing the spokes with wedges, and taking off and re-affixing the

tires, red hot, over bands of green wood nailed on to the shrunken felloes.

Thus refitted we again took our way westwards, no longer over the rolling prairie, but a series of hills and valleys, all equally desolate and sterile, cut up by deep ravines, and barred by rocky steps which tasked our utmost energies to master.

This was the country of the Upsarokas, or Crow Indians; a race of inveterate marauders, and in addition to the exhausting toil of wayfaring, we were now under the necessity of exercising double vigilance by day and night against the predatory attempts of the natives.

Tho' the Black Hills had been visible to us even before reaching Laramy's Fork, our march over the interval had been so interrupted by the ruggedness of the route and casualties caused thereby, that it was not till the beginning of November we arrived at the defile, thro' which it was proposed to pass

that formidable barrier; and we determined, ere attempting this, as our provisions were again got low, and game seemed here to be abundant, to devote a couple of days to buffalo hunting, with the view of laying up a store that might last us into winter quarters.

Although the neighbourhood was accounted dangerous, yet so, too, might be considered every step of our future route, and it was thought better to brave the peril here, rather than incur that of being stopped by our necessities under circumstances still less favourable.

We accordingly took up a temporary station at the foot of an advanced spur of the main range of hills, where a chaotic pile of fallen rocks afforded to our small party a position at once covert and defensible.

All night long was heard the hoarse bellowing of the animals we were to chase upon the morrow, and as Jannock gathered from these sounds that they had been smartly

hunted during the day by the Indians, we waited impatiently for dawn with the determination of setting about and getting over our hazardous business at the earliest.

At length the rosy tint we looked for streaked the East, the cool breezes of morning, scented with autumnal frost, floated from the plain below, swept thro' the tufts of fir on the mountain sides, and passed into the gloomy gorge we were about to penetrate.

Everything being prepared over night we arose, and swallowing the while a few mouthfuls of dried meat, mounted our wizened steeds for the work of the day. Jannock and Robin had their respective rifles, myself my double barrel, and the Delawares (besides their pistols) bows and arrows—in the particular chase we had in view, the most effective weapon that could be used.

Fortune at the outset seemed disposed to favor us, for we had not gone much more than half a mile when we came upon an outlying troop of six buffaloes couched in a slight hollow of

the ground, of which two, a cow and bull, were speedily dispatched with arrows, our firearms not being used lest the noise might alarm the rest. After which, proceeding forwards piloted by our Delawares, we presently fell in with the main body, and approaching on the leeward side under cover of an opportune rise of ground, on topping this we beheld the plain literally alive with countless thousands of these uncouth animals, here packed in close masses wending on their southward migration, there chased by their relentless foes (for the hunters had already got among them), scudding with frantic roars towards every quarter of the horizon.

On examining the hunters carefully Jan-nock pronounced them to be whites—Mexicans he thought, but it was not long ere the sharp eyes of our Delawares detected the presence of Indians also.

As it would not have done to return with our object unaccomplished, it was resolved to unite our forces with the supposed white

party, and thus strengthened, brave any risk which there might be of collision with the common foe. Meat must be obtained at all hazards.

Forward we accordingly pushed, and mingling with the Mexicans (for such they proved to be) were soon among the herds, actively engaged in the general work of slaughter.

I had already dropped a fine cow and was drawing within shooting distance of another, when my horse tripped and fell, throwing me some yards ahead of him. Though neither myself nor the animal was much the worse, I found to my vexation my gun was badly fractured at the gripe—rendered, indeed, for the time unserviceable. Being too much excited, however, with the sport to think of giving it up, I remounted my mustang and still rode on after a knot of hunters whom I saw some distance in advance skirting another spur of the hills round which had swept a troop of buffalo they followed.

Among this group was Robin, whom I

wished to overtake in order to borrow his piece, or at least have his help in repairing my own, and I had already got within some rods of him, when suddenly a band of about a dozen Indians burst with loud yells from the adjoining rocks, and charging the unfortunate youth, together with the three stranger horsemen who were with him, in flank, unhorsed the former in a twinkling.

I was too far behind to render timely aid, and probably no earthly intervention could have saved him, had not the Mexican leader, who was in advance, wheeling round the moment he heard the hostile whoop, and recalling what men he had about him, hastened instantaneously to the rescue. Leaving his three countrymen who were still contending with the assailants, to be helped by his followers, he made at once to the prostrate figure of poor Hood, who having been overmatched in the death-grapple by his antagonist was now upon the point of being despatched by him. The Mexican's piece being uncharged, he had

seized the 'lasso' that hung on his saddle bow, and whirling it with marvellous dexterity over the Indian's shoulders as his arm was already raised to strike, reined his horse suddenly round, and ere he could utter an exclamation, dragged the savage off on to the plain.

By this I had got up to the aid of my unhorsed squire, whose gun had gone off in his fall, and was assisting him to rise, when struck by a peculiar cry, I turned my head—to behold the gallant fellow who had so promptly saved him fall to the ground transfixed by an arrow!

It appeared that while dismounted, and engaged in securing the antagonist he had lassoed, a dastardly Upsaroka (for to this tribe the marauders belonged) had seized the opportunity to steal up and shoot him from behind through the body.

The deed, however, did not pass wholly unavenged. The Indians had been mastered by the coming up of the reinforcement, and

compelled to fly, the miscreant in question, through the delay caused by his foul act, being the last. Ere he had passed over the few score yards that would have carried him into safety, Bryce Jannock came galloping up attracted by the tumult, to whom he was eagerly pointed out by the bystanders, none of whom, by some unlucky chance, happened to have their pieces loaded. To mark, level, and fire was but the work of an instant with Bryce, and almost with the report we had the satisfaction of seeing the wretch's bridle arm fall nerveless and broken by his side.

"There fri'nd," cried the hunter as he did it, "that'll sarve till we meet again; he won't pull foul bow again in a hurry, won't that child."

All our attention now was directed to the unfortunate Mexican whose aid we were so deeply indebted to. Such was the force with which the arrow had been shot that it had actually passed through his body, and projected in front full two-thirds of its length.

Though the wound did not appear to threaten immediate death, from the great pain attending respiration it was evident the lungs had been seriously injured, and the results must prove ultimately fatal.

Constructing a rude litter we placed him upon it, and leaving a sufficient party to gather and bring in the buffalo meat, with the aid of the rest conveyed him slowly and carefully to our camp. Here a comfortable lair was made for him, and Robin constituting himself nurse did all that our simple means allowed of to alleviate his pain and supply his wants.

A considerable quantity of meat was brought in during the course of the evening by our own and the Mexican hunters, the latter of whom remained with us through the night, awaiting the morning's report on the state of their wounded chief.

They were in sooth a motley crew, some dozen in number, composed of various nationalities, dressed in the wide pantaloons, jackets

and "sombreros" of the Western republic, in which lay almost their sole point of uniformity save a certain hard wiry, weatherworn cast of physique, indicating (whether employed for good or evil) a life of an incessant action.

The one I least relished of the band was a renegade Yankee, who unfortunately seemed to have most influence in it, and now that his superior was likely to become burdensome, he busied himself through the better part of the night in stirring up mutiny and persuading the men to abandon him. Nor were his vile efforts ineffectual, for the next day while our party were all abroad fetching in meat, with the exception of Robin, who never left the bedside of his preserver, this recreant, with several others he had seduced, came to the hut, and had the cruelty to tell his suffering chief that as there now seemed no chance of his recovery they considered their engagement at an end, and that the lateness of the season would compel them to make their way back

without delay. They ended by demanding payment for their services, which, unable himself to move a limb, their wounded Captain directed Robin to take from his purse, and paid and discharged them all on the spot.

Robin on relating the affair added, that though the Mexican officer had said but few words on the occasion, the heartlessness evinced by his men seemed to have left a very painful impression on his mind.

It was indeed but too evident, as his unfeeling followers had stated, that with the serious inward lesion he was suffering from, there could be little hope of his recovery, and it thus became our duty to consider what measures should be taken by ourselves under these peculiar circumstances. To abandon a man who had sacrificed himself in defending us was not to be thought of for a moment; to take him on with us in his present state would be simply to accelerate his end, and to wait where we were during the term he might

linger on would expose us to a repetition of mischances, such as that which had already befallen us. It was eventually decided to suspend our journey for the present, establish our quarters in some securer part of the same locality, and lay in supplies with the view of our possibly remaining there, yet leaving it still in our power, according as circumstances should determine, to proceed as we had originally intended.

Our first step in pursuance of this plan was to remove our camp to a less exposed site.

A suitable position was accordingly selected at a greater height on the rocky spur overlooking our former one, which, while screened itself from observation, commanded a good view over the plain—a point of much importance to men who had to keep a perpetual look out for both food and foes.

Here, after constructing a snug and weather-proof “wigwam,” we transferred ourselves, our patient, and our stores, the third day after that of our unfortunate rencounter.

Our waggon was stowed away in a secret cleft within gunshot of our quarters, and our trusty mules depastured by day on the plain below, whilst at night they were gathered into a sort of natural fold or "corral," which it would have been difficult to force without alarming us.

From this time days and weeks passed away occupied almost wholly in buffalo hunting, though our little party (it is almost needless to say the Mexicans had been as good as their word and gone off,) lessoned by past disaster, compelled themselves to observe a caution which detracted both from the pleasure and productiveness of the pursuit. Notwithstanding this, however, by the time these animals had left the neighbourhood, we had succeeded in amassing a store of provender, which, properly husbanded, we calculated would last well on into the winter.

Then we rested, kept quiet in our little fortalice, and amused, rather than employed, our time in erecting another and contiguous

hut for the accommodation of our invalid, where, free from the noise of household work and conversation, he might wear out his remaining days in the utmost ease his state permitted.

It was very apparent he was of gentle birth and nurture, however ambiguous the circumstances in which we met with him, spoke English with much correctness, and when not prostrated by pain, would occasionally enter into conversation with me, shewing marks of a liberal and cultivated mind, though distempered, as I could not help conceiving, by some deep and heart-locked misery.

Shortly after changing to our new quarters his health seemed so much to have improved that we began to entertain some hopes of his recovery, but this flattering promise quickly fled, and then began a steady and unvarying decline till the end of the fifth week, when his stomach refused all nutriment, and the struggle became evidently narrowed down to hours.

CHAPTER II.

THE "TRACKER'S" STORY.

AT this time, one afternoon, when after a continuance of fine clear weather, the atmosphere began to break and show signs of coming storm, I received a request thro' Robin to attend our suffering guest, and it was added by the bearer that it might be as well to lose no time in doing so.

On entering his hut I found him lying in a state of apparent repose, when in a low but quite distinct voice he addressed me as follows:

"I have ventured to ask your attendance,

Señor Ruysdale, that I might thank you for your care and kindness towards me, and in requital, if you should deem it worth listening to, give you a brief outline of your patient's history.

"Draw nigh to my bedside, Señor, and humour my lame attempts in relating it, as I believe they are in truth the last I shall be able to make. My wound is unusually easy to night, from which, after the pain it has occasioned me, and well knowing it to be mortal, medical science points to but one conclusion.

"I am by birth a Spaniard, but my parents having been compelled by civil persecution to seek refuge in France, the earlier part of my unquiet life was spent in that country.

"If you should have travelled in its southern parts you may have remarked the little antiquated town of —— (the name unfortunately escaped me), nestling in a cleft of the sea cliff, and overlooking the sandy bay that separates it from the rocky island opposite, with its ruined abbey and dismantled castle of the

d'Aulaire's. In this secluded ville my parents in their flight from proscription took up their abode, and here a daughter was born to them, who died shortly after seeing the light. It was at this time, being then two years old I received a playmate in the young Leonore d'Aulaire, who having lost her mother whilst yet an infant, had been consigned to my own as foster parent.

"Being reared under the same roof—by the same hand—sharing together every childish sport, we early conceived in our little souls, too little then to understand the difference of rank, a natural, and as deep as our years allowed, affection for each other. Few parts are there of that sandy bay that have not borne our coupled foot prints, few of its sea-mossed stones we have not gamboled round; seldom did the vesper bell resound but our blended voices returned the 'Ave Maria;' seldom the sun sink beneath the western wave without drawing our mutual glances on its glory. Ah! those big bright eyes of my little Leonore, how

often would I watch in them the innocent wellings of her soul, and wonder if they saw aught to answer their unspoken pleadings in my own. I scarce could tell; her spirit was mild, tho' sparkling, clear, and transparent as a glass vase, while mine lay deep within, tho' made of fire, which somehow or other the cunning queen divined, and seemed to take secret pleasure in eliciting.

"Thus we grew up till she had attained the age of eight, when her constitution (to strengthen which she had been placed near the coast and under my mother's care), being thought sufficiently confirmed she was, much to my affliction, removed from our own to her father's household.

"As I was naturally in the old nobleman's favour, from being associated with one so dear to him, he took upon himself the care and expense of my education, sending me, when old enough, to a good school at Avignon—the City of Laura, who even while quite a school boy, often presented herself to my fancy in

the guise of Leonore. Here the prospect of again beholding her was the most pleasurable of my anticipations for the holidays, and when they arrived, their happiest hours were spent in renewing our childish rambles amidst their former haunts, still with the innocent delight of old, but with thought already more developed, and blanking the cheek at times with the dread of our communion terminating.

“At the castle (where a wing was still left habitable for the occasional occupation of the family), I was always a welcome visitor, and there again I was able to enjoy the ever-grateful presence of my foster-sister. A charming spot it was—that ruined pile posted on the rose-coloured cliff, eyeing in pride of place its vassal township opposite, and sweetly they varied our sea-shore walks—the romp and ramble through its shattered chambers, or idling sea-view from its battlements.

“An end was at length put to this delightful intercourse by the removal of my playmate to the metropolis, for the purpose of educa-

tion, and my own transference to a place of more special training, for the particular profession I was to be brought up to—the medical.

“For four long years I pursued my scholastic studies, or rather floundered my way among them; the promise of talent, at times, evinced by me being often crossed by sallies of a somewhat wild and capricious temperament.

“My schoolday term being ended, I repaired to Paris for a few weeks, ere proceeding to finish my studies at your celebrated university of Edinburg. Here I did not long delay in calling on Mdlle. d’Aulaire, and was astonished at the wonderous change these four momentous years (for such, at her age, they ever are to woman,) had wrought in her. Though from the first exhibiting promise of more than ordinary intellect and beauty, I was quite unprepared for the dazzling display of both I now met with. But the change was to me for evil as well as good, and the personal superiority evinced by her, conspired with

that of her position in repressing my nascent hopes. She received me with that half apprehensive air of *gène*, that would have sealed the fate at once of ordinary love; but mine was far from such, and in answer to its potent pleading, I obtained from her, at last, the precious acknowledgment, that her ancient regard for me remained unchanged, but that by her father's express commands, she was withheld from making further demonstration of it.

"It needed but this obstruction to manifest in its fullest scope the passion that had rooted itself in my being. In its eloquent, untaught language, and with a suitable display of devotion, I was assuring her of the impossibility of my recognizing so harsh a sentence, when, as ill luck should order it, the austere old noble himself broke in upon our interview, and precipitated the very doom I was protesting against.

"The old man had taken us at advantage, and as parent of the one and patron of the

other, our spirits were tacitly swayed by his authority.

“Appealing to my sense of honor and gratitude, he extorted from me the reluctant promise that, for the ensuing three years of my university course, I would abstain from setting foot in France, and that my stay there at that time should be limited to but three days longer. Should any infraction be made of this engagement, the intimate relations that had hitherto subsisted between our families would be broken up for ever.

“Knowing his grave, unswerving character, and, as I have said, to escape more complete perdition, I gave him the pledge he required.

“Behold me then an élève in your famous Scottish university, one of the marquis’s reasons for choosing which (besides what may be inferred from the foregoing), had been his desire of my acquiring the English language, with a view to qualifying myself for the management of some large estates he held in

Louisiana ; behold me I say a medical student—such at least in name, though little in sooth beyond, for a deep and listless melancholy soon grew upon me, rendering all study savourless, and the lectures of the professor and learning of the schools as profitless as the lore of alchemy.

“With your poet Ossian in my pocket I would turn my back on college and town, and wending to some wild glen or sea-washed cove, find amidst the moving strains and misty imagery of the Celtic bard something that would at once respond to and assuage the vague and incessant cravings of my soul. In these solitary rambles I contracted a strong and enduring passion for natural scenery, to which there are few parts of your Scottish realm that have not in their turn ministered.

“Two years had worn away of this unsatisfactory existence and I was sitting one evening in my chamber enjoying my pipe with a fellow student, when a letter was put

into my hand. It was from my parents, who were then living in Paris, and among other matters informed me that M. d'Aulaire who had a strong turn for scientific pursuits, had gone over to England on a tour of inspection through the manufacturing districts, his daughter, 'my old playmate,' accompanying him. This was news indeed. I read the passage over twenty times, giving I fear, but little heed to the rest of the letter.

"Impelled by my secret longings I formed the instant resolution of proceeding southwards and endeavouring to obtain an interview or at least a sight of Leonore, rejoicing to think the terms of my parole now interposed no obstacle to my doing so.

"Strapping a knapsack to my shoulders I grasped my staff and was ten miles away from Edinburgh that same night.

"Reaching on the third day one of those industrial districts that mark some of the most dreary portions of your island, I was

approaching towards evening, tired and dusty, the great manufacturing town that was its centre, when I beheld a small party of pedestrians coming along the causeway towards me. Absorbed in my own reflections I looked at them awhile unconsciously, until descending from the 'trottoir' into the road, the peculiar mien of a lady who was last suddenly fixed my observation.

"They were making for a gateway opposite, leading into some suburban nursery grounds, which — it being, I believe, one of your rarely occurring state holidays—were at this time pretty well thronged by parties of the neighbouring townsfolk.

"Through this they passed, the lady still behind, and as her figure disappeared with a motion of airy grace peculiar to it, and a glance '*à la derobée*' at the dusty wayfarer whose gaze she had attracted, I became all at once convinced it could be no other than Leonore herself.

"The next instant I was at the garden gate, and entered a little distance in their rear.

"Mingling with the groups that filled the place, I kept her carefully in view, watched her, unknown myself, bestowing her coveted smiles on all around."

The speaker paused awhile, and then remarked, "It is strange these by-gone scenes, apparently so trivial, should recur to me still so strong, and you may think it savouring of frivolity to dwell on them at a time like this; yet, if we reflect aright, it is not the hours it counts that make up life, but the events that give it colour and shape its destinies. The incidents I have related and am about to, were such to me. I was then but eighteen years of age, and deep in love, which threw its secret glamour on every circumstance connected with it.

"Though so little successful in the garden, I was able to get a billet to my mistress's hand during the course of the evening, and

obtain from her a consent to a meeting on that following.

“At some leagues distance from the town I have alluded to was one of those mystic circles raised by the ancient Druids. This had naturally engaged the fancy of the virtuoso Marquis, who with his daughter had repaired to an hotel in the neighbourhood for the purpose of examining it. The evening of the day preceding was that fixed on for our interview.

“Punctual to the appointed time there I accordingly was, waiting on a sombre summer’s evening for the advent of my soul’s desire.

“At this time the sky was overcast with a thick pile of cloud, laced here and there with strips of angry light, lending a look of terror to the sullen heath, and giving a necromantic meaning to those still, grey stones, yet telling in their unchanged uprightness of the power that had raised them in their remotest eld. This night—this scene—from the world of

feeling it evoked in me, has stamped its every feature on my memory.

“ In the centre was a large altar stone or ‘ cromlech ’ that had reeked in its time with human sacrifice.

“ Here the priests of old had practised their hieromancy by breaking into the house of life—here, acted infernal rites that shunned the day, and paled the orb of night they were enacted by. Might not their heathenish spells attend it still, and was it a seemly spot to attest the interchange of righteous love? Alas! that grey old stone with its collar of heath, and crown of moss, purged by the lustrations of two thousand years, was innocent, in sooth, enough, but the sad light of futurity gleams back on it, and presents it to me now as the meetest shrine we could have chosen for offering our ill-starred vows.

“ I had been upon my watch upwards of an hour, and the moon had already shewn her disc thro’ the fissures of the clouds, when I

distinguished two figures against the lighter loom of the western sky.

“They were female too, and now stopping—now advancing, gradually approached.

“Awed by the solemn look of the ancient colonnade, they halted for a moment on the outskirts, where one remained, the other alone entered it; and I now beheld clearly the lineaments of my well-beloved Leonore.

“In a few moments we met, and ah! what were my sensations after such long and bitter separation as, feeding on each other eyes and wrapt in our stolen embrace, we exchanged the protestations of undying love. When urgently implored to grant me hope, she would say, ‘O, Roderique, my friend, my heart is yours still as ever, but you know my father’s obstinacy—fate rules us all—let us trust to time—a day may come when we may renew our early fellowship, and for my part, you may truly trust I shall ever live in looking for it.’

“Though it was all I could in reason ask,

I was far from being satisfied with this, and in the exaltation of my feeling led her to the sacrificial stone, and made her, not only swear she would be mine, but imprecate a curse upon her head if ever she should violate her faith. On my own part, I swore the same, and registered a vow above, that should I be defrauded of my prize I would seek my amends in death. Such are the fierce resolves of youthful passion, at which philosophers frown and grey beards smile.

“Well, I have done my best in manifold perils of war and travel, to fulfil the oath then taken, and yon savage, with his felon shaft, has given it effect at last.

“We were yet engaged in this engrossing converse when the rumbling of thunder was heard above—the clouds gathered pile upon pile over our heads, and thick darkness stole over the heath, rendering us almost invisible to each other; presently the lightning began to play, and heavy drops descend, making immediate return impossible, and warning us to

seek what shelter the place we were in could afford. I drew my cloak round Leonore, and seating ourselves under one of the Druid columns* whilst the elements raged around us, passed one of those borrowed hours of bliss that we may challenge life to parallel. It was indeed the renewing of early fellowship, and has clothed that Druid temple in my memory with the sanctity of a holy shrine.

“The clouds cleared off at length, the moon came forth, and our interview alas, ended. It was the last our happy stars were ever to gleam on.”

Here the speaker paused—interrupted as it seemed, by the painful force of his recollections.

“The following year, my academical term being ended, I left your melancholy shores without regret.

“After passing a few weeks with my parents in Paris, I proceeded once more southwards, on a visit to my former home, partly to realize some property we still held there, and partly

(matter of most concernment to myself), in the hope of renewing relations with my noble sweetheart, who was staying, for the bathing season, at her father's castle.

"As I trotted my horse down the hill that overlooked the place the bells were merrily ringing, the sounds I used once to deem so pleasant when heard with my childish *bien aimée*. They pleased me not, however, now—rather produced a feeling of melancholy, and conveyed a presentiment of evil.

"Our old residence being occupied by strangers, I made for the house of an old woman, who dwelt by the sea side, where Leonore and I, in our younger days, used to resort for aid and counsel in our schemes and sports. As I clattered over the pavement towards it, still the joy bells rang—still rang with the same ill-boding sound as I drew up and descended at our ancient gossip's door. She was seated by its threshold busily engaged at her spinning wheel.

“ ‘ Ah, *mon* Roderique, you, and at such a time !’

“ ‘ For God’s sake, Therese, tell me what these bells are tolling for ; they drive me mad.’

“ ‘ Tolling, *cher* Roderique ! but alack you may well say so ; know you not then the lady Leonore is wedded this moring to the Spanish count, Aquaviva ?’

“ I heard no more—the reins dropped from my hand, the blood rushed back to my heart, and I felt as one smitten to the ground with a thunderbolt.

“ At that very juncture the nuptial cortège issued from the sacred edifice—

“ The bride and the bridegroom came forth hand in hand,
I saw my false love, and my bosom I manned
With the pride of despair as I met her ! ”

(“ I’ve read up your ditties in my day, señor, for love and poetry are twin sisters.)

“ As they came near, my horse abandoned to itself became uneasy at the pomp and

clamour of the procession, and created some disorder by its caracols.

“ ‘ Whose is that horse ? Switch it out ! ’ was the cry. A grey-headed old servant caught the animal, and leading it back to me, as I stood statue-like at the cottage door, said, as he replaced the reins in my hands, ‘ I suppose, Sir, it belongs to you. ’

“ ‘ Yes, ’ I replied, and as I did so Leonore and her Spanish spouse came by ; ‘ and I must ask your lady’s pardon for its restiveness ; the animal like its master was scarce prepared to witness such a spectacle as this. ’

“ My look met hers as my words reached her ear—a look that must have savoured of the sepulchre, as my words might have issued from its depth. They had their effect. She sank with a sigh into the old domestic’s arms, who with trained fidelity supported her trembling form as the train proceeded.

“ The incident, however, had not escaped the notice of her Spanish bridegroom, and from that hour I am given to believe—and it

is another bitter record of the past—might be dated the unhappiness that was destined to mar their union, and fulfil her sad portion of the self-imprecated curse.

“For myself I mounted ere they were well out of sight, turned my horse’s head towards the Pyrenees, and never set foot on the soil of France again.

“During these latter years the Spanish Revolution of 1820 had run its course, and wishing to divert my mind from vain and depressing recollections, on returning to my native country I sought and obtained a commission as captain in a force destined to repress the rising insurrectionary spirit in our Mexican colonies.

“It was here I first met with the Indian tribes, and entered into that new field of action which was to furnish me with employment for the rest of my short and aimless life.

“Stationed in a Californian frontier town, exposed to the ravages of the Camanches, I

had ample opportunity of observing this savage yet not uninteresting race, witnessing their barbarous exploits, and retaliating their bloody inroads.

“It was from this latter branch of my occupation, and the aptitude (partly a gift of nature) I evinced in tracing out the depredators, that I gained the title by which I have been since widely known in those regions of the Tracker.

“Those who marvelled at my restless enterprise little divined its cause—little deemed that like the fleetness of the Roman race-horse it was prompted by the secret pricking of the spikes attached to me by destiny.

“Four years have passed since my first setting foot in the New World. I recently got tidings of my father’s death, and through the influence of time, my mind having attained something like tranquillity, I yielded to the secret wish I had long felt and combated, of revisiting my native land, and settling among the scenes of my early life.

“An unlucky wound I was laid up with had prevented me from using the necessary exertions for procuring provisions for the journey to the States, and it was whilst endeavouring to obtain these from the first buffalo herd we had met with since passing the mountains that I fell in with your party, and was made by yon miscreant Crow so useless and cumbersome an addition to it.

“Those men you saw about me (continued the Spaniard, after a pause), wild, unruly spirits as they were, I yet had thought would have been faithful to me, for I had lived with them on terms of brotherhood for years—partaken their toils and perils—some indeed saved the lives of at the risk of my own. I got an unlucky wound and—”

The wind which had been southing for some time in the gorge below, here rose in a sudden gust upon the height, burst open the flimsy door of the hut, and scattered a shower of sparks from our wood fire over its floor. By the time I had closed the entrance, and

laid some fresh faggots on the hearth, we could see by the freshened flame our wounded charge lying with his eyes shut, either asleep or in a state of lethargy. The story I had heard from him had been spoken in a low tone, but with clear and continuous utterance, evincing much collectedness of mind, and that vivid reminiscence of past events which often characterizes the last moments of life; his efforts, however, had exhausted him, and anxious not to break his apparent rest, after waiting some time longer, to see if he would resume his theme, I betook myself to my own sleeping lair.

The following day was passed by him in the same tranquil torpor, and it was not till towards evening of the one after that, symptoms of restlessness set in, which indicated a change for the worse.

His mind began to wander, breaking abruptly from shortlived lulls, to wild distracted ravings of heaven and Leonore. A

little after the winter sun set these again subsided, and from this, and the painfully cadaverous colour of his countenance, the closing scene I felt convinced was now at hand.

It having become dark in the hut, I had lighted a torch of pitch-pine to serve the purpose of a candle, and heedfully continued my watch by the dying man's bed-side. Suddenly I perceived his eyes open spasmodically—the fingers of one hand began to twitch the coverlet, whilst those of the other were tightly clasped round some object he had taken from his breast. Snatching up the link, I was again, in a moment, at his side, and bent down my ear to receive his latest words.

“Let it go with me,” such they were, while the fingers of his closed hand relaxed, “to the grave; lay it on my breast—if you should meet with Leonore, tell her this—say, that our shadows rest together, and finish the fond dream we’ve lived in.”

These were the last syllables that came from him; the object he held in his hand was the portrait of his life-linked mistress.

Such was the end of the Tracker Roderique—the close of his disastrous love-story. Young, and of semi-tropic strain, the passion had fastened itself on him with a force unknown in northern climes, keeping his life-tide at the flood, and ruling its currents to the last. Amid the howlings of the wintry storm the votarist's spirit had passed away, and kneeling by the worn out corpse I fervently prayed to its repose.

From the envelope of the portrait, his name I found to be Roderique Diez, and his age not more than twenty-six.

CHAPTER III.

HAVING many momentous matters to attend to ere winter should set fairly in, we buried the remains of the Spanish wanderer with all befitting ceremonial—especially regarding his last declared wish—two days after his decease, and immediately commenced preparations for transferring our camp — which now that the buffalo were gone had lost its chief recommendation—to a locality less liable to observation.

The few weeks that had passed by had enabled us to explore the neighbourhood more thoroughly, and choose a new camping site some miles yet further on the Hills, on the

side of a narrow 'strath' or valley, where an elevated terrace reached by a slanting causeway, formed by the stratification of a steep mountain slope, offered the requisite advantages of retirement and inaccessibility, while commanding hunting ground of apparently average promise.

The valley stretched below it for some miles, watered by a stream still unfrozen, and presenting a show of herbage which though not of the most flourishing appearance—as was natural at that season—we hoped might yet be made available for winter fodder for our cattle.

Sensible of the vital importance of these animals to our further progress we resolved to lose no time and spare no pains in providing effectually for their safety during the hard season that was approaching, postponing even the consideration of our own necessities to this.

Not being able to house them near ourselves upon the height, we chose out a shel-

tered spot at the opposite side, within rifle shot, where, cutting down the fir trees that grew around, we constructed a comfortable shed, by slanting the timber against a rock slightly hollowed underneath, and large enough to harbour the entire number—nine in all. For the present their shelter was left open that they might have access to their pasture as long as it should remain free from snow.

The autumn hay which all hands were then set to gather in, was secured day after day on a ledge adjoining, but out of reach of the animals, and devoting ourselves diligently to this work for nearly a week, we at length beheld a goodly stack grow up, which eased us of some of our anxiety for their well-being.

This stack, however, like the cured meats destined for ourselves, was to be regarded only as a reserved store, and not to be drawn on till provender should fail from other sources.

As the sky became day by day more filled

with clouds—the harbingers of coming snow—we at length felt the necessity of turning our attention from our beasts to the task of making a habitation for ourselves.

The little terrace where it was to stand was reached by the sloping pathway I have before mentioned, at a height of some hundred feet from the ‘strath’ below, having a sheer precipice of this depth on that side, and a towering cliff, of which we could not see the top, on the other. The approach was sufficiently narrow—scarcely averaging six feet in width—and sprinkled with dwarf pines, which furnished ready materials for our architecture.

Following the course pursued in reference to our quadrupeds, we chose out a spot where a sort of cave was formed by the crumbling away of the under strata, which, by placing against the overbrowing cliff the stems of fir trees, sloping at a good angle from it, gave us all the accommodation we required.

A snug and roomy hut was thus speedily

constructed, which by filling the interstices of the timber with dried grass, and thatching all over with a thick fell of pine branches was rendered completely weatherproof.

At the apex, where the tops rested against the rock, a small opening was left in the roofing to allow due passage for the smoke.

In this rude but far from uncomfortable structure we had no little satisfaction in establishing ourselves on the eve of what was about to prove a long and rigorous winter, and storing what was left of our worldly goods, which we next, and with no little interest, proceeded to take an inventory of. The account stood thus:—In respect of provision we possessed about a month's supply of our lately acquired buffalo meat; the greater part to our deep chagrin having, through some neglect in the curing, become putrid. Of that laid in at the outset—hams, salted pork, tongues, &c.—about half the original quantity was left. Of flour and biscuits all had been consumed with the exception of a few pounds

of the former, which our stock also of coffee and sugar seemed scarce likely to survive. On the other hand our tea was almost untouched, and in spite of persevering smoking there yet remained a respectable amount of tobacco—an extra stock having been laid in for trading purposes—which we had already learned to eke out with ‘Shongshasha’ or the bark of the red willow.

Though not exactly an article of provision, I have classed the tobacco with them, as ‘many a time and oft’ it served as substitute.

The residue of the flour and sugar it was voted *nem. con.* should be reserved for our few and far between days of jubilee.

Having made all snug within our wigwam, whilst frugally faring on our store of sound meat, we thought it prudent to lose no time in setting about the task of augmenting it.

Though not destitute of wild animals the aspect of the country we had got into was better qualified to have pleased the eye of my pictorial namesake than that of an English

sportsman. Stationing himself at the door of the hut he would there have beheld little else than a wild and savage jumble of sombre cliffs and shaggy pine-woods, till his half-cowed gaze would seek relief in the narrow belt of verdure underneath him. Should he brace himself to extend his view, a repetition on a still ruder scale of the same scenery would meet it, and impress the inevitable conviction on his mind that if game were to be obtained at all, it could only be by the exercise of unusual energy, address, and nerve.

After their late general migration to the South, there would be little present chance of falling in with the buffalo, but an active hunter might still strike the black and grizzly bear, the elk, the black-tailed deer—a variety nearly twice the size of the common one—the ‘ashahta’ or mountain sheep, as well as that rarer species of the latter, which, characterized by its smaller horns, is even yet more shy and unapproachable.

Limiting our endeavours therefore to the

latter animals enumerated, we gave ourselves to the work of hunting with a diligence proportioned to our need.

Our party was divided for the purpose into two detachments, going out on alternate days, and each generally accompanied by one of the Delawares, who, by their innate aptitude for the chase, were ever looked on as our trump cards.

Maugre, however, all our efforts, the game was found difficult to come by, and as the winter advanced, our days of fasting and short commons became multiplied in an even ratio with its rigours. Still, before Christmas, the sharp bite of absolute privation had been yet unfelt by us; the buffalo meat (which I scarce need say was carefully husbanded), holding out for a length of time, and after it had gone, a deer, sheep, or mountain hare being forthcoming in the nick of time to avert the threatened void.

It was not until the close of this festive period that positive want became experienced

by us. Then, however, for three whole days, during which it had snowed incessantly, famine had reigned within our dwelling, and we greatly feared we should have to welcome the new year with empty stomachs and hippocratic faces. To escape, however, this grievous consummation Providence once again purveyed us means.

One of the Indians, (Pegtop, I think), who had happened to rise earlier than the rest, on the day in question, awoke his melancholy mates by a sudden exclamation of joy. Stepping in a body to the threshold we discovered the cause of his jubilation to be the apparition of a buffalo—one single solitary animal—browsing on a knoll below, which had been partly bared of snow by the winds.

Here, then, our new year's dinner had come to meet us more than half-way, and we felt we should richly deserve our doom if we failed in what remained to appropriate it.

The two Indians being cleverest in 'approaching,' were sent off to shoot him, if possible

where he stood, or at any rate cut off his retreat thro' the further end of the valley, when nothing would be left him but a flight through our own, which terminated in a gorge where the rest of the famished party posted at short range, could scarcely fail to bring him down.

Our two stalkers stealing down the sloping causeway succeeded in getting each a shot from a clump of firs at the bottom, when the animal dropping, and from its immobility appearing to be dead, they ran up with more haste than discretion to obtain full assurance of the fact.

Honest Swiftfoot, who happened to hold that faith, was disagreeably undeceived, for no sooner did he catch the animal's eye, than springing at once upon its legs, it made at him with the velocity of a rocket, and but for a timely shot from his brother Delaware, who had taken the precaution of reloading, would have sped him more quickly to the next world than his swift feet had ever taken him

in this. Finding the odds, however, thus against him the grizzly bison sheered away at a good pace towards the gorge where the remainder of us were now in waiting to receive him.

Labouring along thro' the deep snow we soon beheld the brute draw near with the two natives hard behind, when stopping as tho' disabled by his wounds within easy shot of us, a volley from Bryce, Robin and myself, laid him once more on his broadside never to rise again.

On overhauling the creature, to our ineffable chagrin and disgust, we found him to be "old bull"—very old bull indeed—so old as to excite a grimace even on the seasoned muscles of Bryce Jannock. Antoine, however, who presently came up, did his best to renew our blighted hopes, by protesting that nothing was insuperable to the genius of cookery, and proceeded to cut him up with a professional gusto, when his quarters were duly transferred to our habitation.

It is only due to our *chef du cuisine* to say that at noon we sat down to some very passable *bouilli*. In fact, Orpheus' music, when it mollified the rocks was but a type of Antoine's boiling in softening the old bull, and though a good deal of its nutritive property had passed into the operative water, yet not so was it suffered to escape us, as we took especial care to appropriate the latter also. Followed by a flour dumpling (well laced with suet), from our hoarded 'leavings,' and wound up with tea and pipes, it enabled us to celebrate the day with something of befitting ceremony.

The winter's sun set early, obscured by gathering storm, and as soon as the shades of night had wrapped the vale, we closed round the well-piled fire, each with a beaker of tea (sweetened for the nonce with the last of our sugar) on his knees, and a well-plenished pipe in his fist, and related his story of past adventure, or listened to those of his comrades.

It was truly a most composite assembly;

among the six of whom it was made up there being no less than four different nationalities. Yet, notwithstanding this variety of race, all were so well in their right places, their tastes, and habits, so in unison, that the utmost harmony prevailed among us.

The fire being in the centre of the hut, there was no 'inglenook' for any acknowledged primate of the party, neither stood there any arm chair or round table for individual ease or general accommodation, but we sat as we best might round the blaze like jolly woodsmen as we were, proud of our calling, each propped on his own good back bone, posed in his peculiar attitude, and dispensing eloquence of his own particular brand.

As a supplementary means of procuring food, some traps had been set in different parts of the valley, in one of which (an unusually strong one), a white wolf had been lately caught and this (the trap) on the present occasion was, by way of amusement,

being passed from hand to hand as a means of trying our respective muscular powers.

Bryce was the only one who could set it by hand alone, which after duly doing, he eyed it for a time, as though some ludicrous reminiscence were suggested by the sight of the implement, then holding it towards me, he remarked, "You'd be rayther scandalized now, squire, I take it, if I was to axe you to let off this kickshaw with your nose."

"I should feel given to decline the invitation, certainly."

"Aye, I dar' say you would, and owe, may be, no thanks to the asker; but what should you say now if I was to tell you I had seen a great, fire-eating 'grizzly' execute that humorous performance?"

"A grizzly bear," cried Robin, brimming with youthful eagerness, "let off a steel trap with its nose, Bryce! Oh, tell us how that was—tell us all about it."

"Well, lad, fill us another can o' cat-lap, for if I try myself, I shall spill the liquor wi'

larfin', it tickles me so yet whenever I think on it. It was on these very hills too, only so'thin' further no'th, and nigh half a lifetime agoe it happened, when Ralph Benyon and me (you'll remember poor Ralph's story, squire) was out tharaway arter beaver; for the country, though as rough, or even rougher than it is here was full o' those quiet creeks the creturs are so fond o'; but it was full of grizzlies as well, and had a bad name for secret onfalls and bloody deeds. Well, I cared as little as any man at that time for things o' this sort, but though I kep my eyes skinned and my ears cocked as I never did afore, I came nigh gettin' some harder rubs than I could well ha' done wi'. I mind the time when I had five open-mouthed Ephraims round me all at once without counting whelps—"

"Lord! and what did you do?" quoth Robin breathless with admiration.

"Clumb a cherry tree boy, and shot'em down one arter another, while they was sayin'

grace to a meal they'd never get. Another time the cretur came on me in the dark as I was solemnizing by my fire arter a hard day's hunt, and I could only save my bacon by ramming a blazing faggot down his throat. The grizzlies was a caution there I tell *you*—enough to ha' given King Nimrod himself a 'wrinkle.'

"But consarnin' this partic'lar grizzly I was a telling on—

"Me and Ralph had been out one evenin' by a creekside a settin' traps for beaver, and had just found a likely spot for our last under a big boulder on the bank. Ralph had given me his rifle to hold while he laid it cleverly down, and I was s'archin' for a 'med'cine' stick to bait it with, when out rushed an almighty big Ephraim from the other side of the stone, and had poor Benny on his back in a twinklin'. It ain't no joke now, to fall into Ephraim's clutches, that's a fact (an assenting grunt was made to this by the shorter Indian) aye, Pegtop has found that

out, I dar say, in's time—well, Benny found it out too, so feelin' hisself in a pickle, he rammed the beaver trap—ready set as it was, right into Ephraim's face, when off it went, quite nat'ral agin his nose, and there by the powers it stuck, past all bruin's power of unfixin', tho' he riz on his hind legs to do it, and brought his fore paws to help him. Ralph, finding hisself at liberty, started up and sloped off across the creek, while b'ar kept pawin' at's muzzle to get rid of his ugly fixen. Findin' rubbin' only made the matter wuss, he'd then stop for awhile, and hold down his head as if tryin' to realize what strange wisitation o' Providence had fallen on him; then his dander riz again, and at it he'd go whack, smack—whang, bang, beatin' his grizzly visnomy to everlastin' smash.

“While the brute was playin' off these antics, I managed to get two shots into him, tho' I was so shuk under the short ribs I reckon they was mostly wasted, and Ralph who had waded to the safer side of the

stream, and soon entered into the pastime (a' was a light hearted coon—Ralph) fairly caved in wi larfin.' 'O Bryce,' shouts he to me at last, as the b'ar tired o' carpenterin' raised his nose into the air, screwed up his jowl till you could see his hind gums, and seemed to be asking' natur' if ever seed ditto to thisn, 'O Bryce,' says 'a 'take that animal away, or he'll do what huggin' didn't; my poor sides is agoin', and 'O Ralph,' says I, a tryin' to load my shootin ir'n, a'most ready to split. 'for goodness gracious sake stop that cretur's goin's on, or I shall be puttin' in the lead first.'

"Well, I loaded at last, and guv him another broadside, but it only increased the comicality of the performance, till Ralph could stand it no longer, but fairly wriggled and roared on the ground, ready to give out. On my own part I loaded and larfed, and shot, and shuk till the ammunition was nigh gone from my pouch and the wind from my bellows, so at last I sat down, and waited as

quietly as my lights would let me, to see what would be the upshot of it all.

“‘Is that cretur gone yet?’ cried Ralph, by and by from the clover, ‘tell me when he’s gone—for massy’s sake, not afore.’

“‘No, he’s a huggin’ on it now, as if it was the best friend he had on ’arth. Oh! Antony, I feel like a goin’ myself, if he stays there much longer.’

“Well, arter hammerin’ and huggin’, and coaxin’, and lettin’ it alone—all to no purpose, Bruin I s’pose began to think the devil was in the game, and streaked away all of a suddenty towards the sundown, with the trap on his snout, as fast as ever, and a howl o’ larfter at his heels, such as I do think was never raised either for b’ar or human, afore or since.

“It was nigh the death o’ both on us—that spree; but it has been vittles and drink many a time since, when b’ar and better meat was scource in the land.”

Bryce wound up his yarn with a sober

cachinnation—the fading “reflet” of past hilarity, which we more than echoed by a general and unstinted round of laughter.

This story led to others from the rest of the circle, myself giving a chapter of my former bear experiences, and Pegtop in his hybrid lingo describing sundry encounters he had had with grizzlies, wherein he had come off victorious by simply seating himself on the ground as the beast came near, and then felling it dead with a single well aimed shot.

Amusing ourselves after this fashion we passed the first day of the year of grace, 1826, which the providential advent of the old bull enabled us so unexpectedly to solemnize.

The mountain air being extremely keen, and our appetites to the full, as much so, the last of its meat, though husbanded with every care, was consumed during the following week, and then came pining days of short rations alternating with actual want.

Towards the close of the month of January, the entire country being wrapped in snow and fixed in the icy grasp of winter, notwithstanding our daily, and far extended forays, entire weeks passed by without our being able to procure anything more satiating than a stray hare, or fox, (for even to this latter we descended) and when, but for the help of our tea and pipes, our position would have been truly desolate.

At such times fragments of rejected victual, nay the very bones and offal we had cast away in better times, would be eagerly sought out again, and by the manipulations of the ingenious Antoine, made up into something solatial for our inwards.

Through the exertions chiefly of Jannock and the Delawares a black-tailed deer was occasionally killed, or a mountain sheep knocked over on the heights, though with an amount of toil and danger that would have staggered if not 'used up' an ordinary sportsman.

This latter pursuit, in fact, resembles cha-

mois hunting in the Alps — offering little chance of success to any but veteran practitioners.

Whether feasting or fasting, however, we managed to maintain our cheerfulness, and to avoid dwelling too much on the gloomy side of our condition, employed the long evenings in preparing, so far as our dwindled means allowed, for the exigencies of the next campaign, renewing or repairing our leathern raiment, patching up our mocassins, and even the half-rotten harness of the waggon, in the hope—vain as it was destined to prove—of Providence sparing us the means of using it.

This, however, we were sorry to find, as the winter advanced, became every day more problematical.

The store of hay gathered from the valley being barely sufficient for our riding horses, in whose preservation our own might be considered as bound up, the unfortunate mules were constrained to forage for themselves on

the few spots around where the snow was not impenetrable, assisted by willow sprays, lopped for them from the thickets on the rivulet side. Two, reduced to mere skeletons, died of sheer starvation, in the latter part of January, and one, early the following month, having rambled too far from its shed, perished in a snow storm it was overtaken by, thus reducing our hardy and well-tried team to three, a number which was still further diminished by subsequent casualties.

Thus struggling on with scarcity and want we got through the first month of the new year, when the increasing difficulty of finding game excited in us the most serious fears that we should not be able to hold out till the snow went away, and animals of the chase appeared in greater plenty.

Weakened and attenuated as we were from these causes, the necessity was yet laid on us of having two hunting parties out daily, and night after night did these come in bringing

nothing but their own lantern visages, and reports of ill success given in voices hollow and hoarse from abstinence.

On the fifth of February, Jannock, Robin, and myself, having made a wider than ordinary circuit over some distant and untried ground, were wending unfreighted without and within on our way homewards, over the scalp of a wood-covered hill, when our steps were suddenly arrested by a steep and apparently impassable precipice.

The day was drawing to a close, and the thick setting of the pinewoods under which we walked, already made it difficult to see our way when this obstacle presented itself, and with it the accompanying conviction that unless passage were effected speedily, darkness would render it impossible, and we should be forced to pass the night on the wild height where we were stationed.

Accordingly no time was lost in examining the line of cliff, but eventually to no purpose, and in sorry and reluctant mood we retreated

into the heart of the fir wood, there to make the best of our enforced position.

We had our blankets by us, it is true, but nothing to eat or drink save a little tea, so that the prospect of our night's sojourn was anything but a genial one.

The weather, too, threatened to be wild, and among the pine tops was heard that hoarse, sea-like roar made by the rush of winds, and waving of multitudinous branches. Snapped by the freshening blast a shower of rotten sticks came hurtling down—falling upon ground bare both of grass and snow, and covered but with kindred spoils. Here and there, amid the timber, might be seen shapeless blocks of stone, carved by the brooding fancy into sepulchres, and nigh them tufts of fern threw dots of deeper shade upon the earth—where the eye involuntarily sought for bones, nor sought in vain, for fragments of brute anatomy lay scattered round, completing the resemblance of the spot to some abandoned burial ground.

It was one of those forest haunts where twilight nestles at noonday, and long ere the sun descends the wanderer, who would enjoy the blessing of light, must trust for its production to his own resources.

We were all, however, by this time pretty fair adepts at fire raising, and not many minutes were let pass ere a vigorous blaze threw its cheering glow on our rueful figures and savage vicinage. By filling our quart tins with snow from the cliff edge, tea was speedily extemporized, which, tho' a wretched substitute for á solid meal, served partly to fill up the vacuum between our belts (already in their last hole) and bellies. After which, betaking to our pipes, we indulged in sundry commentaries on the animal remains that lay about us.

Taking up the "tibia" of what I deemed to be a deer, I handed it to Jannock, requesting his opinion as to its derivation; "deer killed by bar," was his reply, and my mental rejoinder, a wish that we might fall in with

the animal in a less advanced stage of dissolution.

Robin, less wedded to tobacco, or perchance less given to anatomical research, went off during the course of our disquisitions to the more profitable duty of gathering firewood.

The weather grew gradually wilder, the gale mounting to a height, which at length put a stop to our conversation and kept us involuntary listeners to its progress.

There is something remarkably impressive in witnessing the might of Nature in haunts where she has long reigned uninvaded. More especially to those who love her loftier manifestations—who feel them strike a key-note in themselves, and awaken a sympathetic exaltation.

The storm, after gathering on the mountain top, swept down with resistless force on the tracts below, swaying our pine grove like a willow bush, and rushing thro' the neighbouring gorge with howls almost resembling human lamentation. At one time, indeed,

during its highest pitch, the likeness was so strong and startling, that Jannock seized my knee with his iron grip, and, his features working with strange emotion, exclaimed:—

“Massy! did ye hear that, squire? one might a’most ha’ taken it for the wild woman’s screech.”

“The wild woman! who was she?”

“Did ye never hear of the wild gal of the Black Hills? The story’s so’tthin’ old by this, but when I trapped here in my younger days the whull country round was ringin’ with it. She was the darter of an overdarin’ emigrant, who had pushed too far west’ard, like our friend, Wainwright, and was tomahawked, with all his family, except herself, by a band of butcherly Blackfeet.

“The gal was spared by the redskin chief, the ‘Splittin Thunder,’ who fancied, I s’pose, to have her for a wife, and led her away captve to his wigwam. Not findin’ Injyn wedlock to her mind (which they say went quite wrong on seein’ her kindred scalped)

she one night split the 'Splittin Thunders' head with his own tomahawk, and made her way off to the mountains, where though traces was found of her from time to time, and her ravin's heerd o' nights for months after, she was never seen again in bodily form by any hunter as would tell about it. It's like eno' the chief's relations would ha' finished her misery by that time, or if they didn't, hunger and the winter couldn't miss.

"Such deeds is far from scarce in this wild land, till, what wi doin', and what wi bidin' on 'em, the heart becomes as hard as these very rocks themselves.

"Well, she has found her rest poor cretur, long ere now, but when one thinks of her night wanderin's, and hears these howls, it's easy to conceit them the wailin' of her troubled spirit."

As Bryce finished his short relation, a spectral looking figure stalked from the outer darkness into the full red blaze of our camp-fire, and a momentary thrill of horror shot

across me as the imagination confounded its appearance with the image raised by the drear tale I had heard. To relieve the reader of a similar feeling, let me say at once the apparition proved only to be our friend Robin, who having returned with his bundle of firewood during the course of Bryce's narrative, had been listening (with much awe) to its conclusion behind a neighbouring pine.

Throwing down his fuel by the fire, he proceeded to inform us that whilst engaged in gathering it, he had discovered a cavern at no great distance off which would afford both better shelter from the weather, and secure us from the danger (now becoming imminent) of falling trees.

Our curiosity being roused by his report, we took a lighted brand, and proceeded to inspect the spot. Under a face of yellowish rock, almost within the reflection of our fire, appeared a dark patch, marking a cavern's mouth, about which were strewn many bones

of various animals—some of them deposited there at evidently a quite recent date.

Lighting a second torch to mend our view, Jannock carefully examined the earth at the entrance, and at length proclaimed the important fact, that it was a bear's den, with the animal then actually in it.

This was good yet tantalizing news, for though we were never in better cue for an ursine rasher, at the present hour, and with our present appliances, it would have been folly to venture on the creature intrenched in its unknown stronghold.

Being in the depth of his winter's sleep there would be little chance, by using common precaution, of his escaping us by stealing off, so it was resolved to let the enterprize lie over till the morrow, when we would send for Pegtop, and provide the usual means for achieving it *secundem artem*. Having come to which conclusion we returned to our fire, wrapped ourselves in our blankets, and com-

forting our craving stomachs with visions of prospective plenty, lay down, despite the elemental uproar, to a sound hunter's sleep.

By the earliest light the next morning, the weather having become again serene, we resumed our exploration of the cliff, to find a practicable passage for our messenger, and at length had the satisfaction of seeing him at the bottom, speeding on his way to headquarters.

It was past noon when he returned, unaccompanied, however, by either of the Delawares, who, like ourselves, were yet abroad; but he had brought with him the chief requisites for our purpose, viz., a couple of beeswax candles, and we decided upon putting it into execution without further delay.

Jannock, to whom such business was no novelty, cheerfully undertook the leading part, with myself and Robin for his supports.

Having well looked to the state of our arms and lighting apparatus, we accordingly entered the den, pitch dark as it was, on our

knees; after crawling in which fashion for some yards, Bryce got out his punk, already fired, and lighting a candle, carefully inserted it in the earthy floor of the cave. Here he took his rifle, which I had hitherto held for him, and retiring into the shades behind, stood, with ourselves, in perfect silence, endeavouring to pierce the gloom that encircled the candle like a wall. Having remained thus for a certain time, and there appearing no sign of the beast's presence, he softly took up the light again, and moved noiselessly forwards till coming to a part where the den narrowed into a mere cranny, and one alone could pass at once, he stopped, and was in the act of re-securing the candle in the earth, when I caught a view beyond him of a black, shapeless mass, in that oscillating sort of motion peculiar to the more savage animals—it was the bear slowly arousing from its winter's sleep.

Jannock perceived it almost at the same moment, but nevertheless, while keeping an

eye upon its motions, persevered in his endeavours at fixing the light firmly in the ground, which, from its hardness, was a matter of some difficulty; this done, he again went a few paces backward, watching, with his piece to his shoulder, the monster's progress toward resuscitation.

Though deep and threatening growls began now to show its anger at our intrusion, it still made no sign of advancing to the light, which alone could ensure us an effective shot; but as our vision became familiarised with the gloom of the murky den, we could clearly see the fierce gleaming of its eyes, which might serve in some sort as a point of aim.

Fearing the light might fail, or our chance not be improved by waiting, I was on the point of proposing to take it with both our pieces as it stood, when I beheld Jannock's rifle at his shoulder, the darkness of the cave illumined by its flash, and the instant after, the candle falling from its socket, became extinguished.

Here was a situation ! That the animal had not been killed was at once apparent from its redoubled and exasperated growling, now mingled with sounds of pain, and it was equally certain we stood in a fair way for being so ourselves, should it charge us in the darkness and narrow pass where we were posted.

In this critical juncture the old woodsman's presence of mind proved probably the salvation of us all.

Aware that a movement of retreat might draw the enemy upon us, he coolly got out his flint and steel, relit the fallen candle, and again secured it in the ground, his every motion accompanied the while, by the growling and groaning of the wounded beast.

Why it forebore to rush upon us, it is difficult to say, unless it were on the supposition of its being cowed by the calm and resolute style of our attack.

Whilst thus engaged in renewing the light, I had reloaded my comrade's piece for him, and we now, though the animal was even less

visible than before, pulled both our triggers upon him simultaneously. A terrific roar of agony was heard amid the reverberations of the discharge, followed by a plunging rush towards us. The light was again capsized, and with all the expedition practicable we retreated towards the cavern-mouth.

After listening awhile on getting out, for any sign that might shew the effect of the last shot, and perceiving all still, in about a quarter of an hour, with a fresh candle, we re-entered the creature's den, and proceeding cautiously to the scene of conflict, found it lying dead on the ground, over the crushed candle—the two apparently extinguished at the same moment.

It did not prove to be of the brown, grizzly species, but the more common black one, as superior to the other in edible qualities, as inferior in strength and fierceness.

It is scarce necessary to add that we lost no time in cutting it up, and after solacing our-

selves with a hearty meal upon the spot, transferred the remainder to head quarters, where (the Delawares having also met with luck) a week's unstinted feeding recompensed us in some sort for our past famishment.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH the region in which we were established seemed one of such apparent solitude—so locked by natural barriers from human access, it is not nevertheless destitute of inhabitants; many a little mountain dell like our own being occupied by single or associated trappers, who, their Autumn hunts being ended, repair here with their Indian squaws or accustomed comrades, and maintain themselves through the winter months on the stores they have already laid in, or can procure by the continued exercise of their calling.

There are many portions of that wild, broken, and extensive country called the Black Hills where, notwithstanding our own ill fortune, game is at all times plentiful, and, aided by their previous experience, its temporary denizens may gain subsistence the whole year round. But when the snow has gone, and the year begun to open, they find themselves in a true hunter's paradise, amidst abounding means for satisfying every want their hardy and half civilized habits leave them open to.

Yet Nature seems still to have stamped the region with an exceptional and emphatic impress. A feeling of solitude attaches to it, even while the voices of some filing band of Indians or Whites yet vibrate on the ear. Superstition also adds her influence. Amidst its sable crags and horrent woods, the peculiar mysticism of his creed exerts the fullest force over the mind of the untutored native; nay, not unfrequently infects the more capable intellect of the white man, who has here been

known to join with his more savage brethren in the usages of their heathenish worship. Yet while prone to obey the call and repair to the temples of devotion, there is something repugnant in the human mind to making them permanent abiding places, and among these haunts where they most confess its power, the sojourn of the tribes resorting there is generally of but short duration—for the purpose chiefly of cutting tent poles, procuring supplies of buckskin, or (actuated by the religious feeling above spoken of), seeking out some solemn spot for offering their vows to the Great Spirit.

Though the district is nominally in the Upsaroka country, we had experienced no molestation during the winter — unless to them was due, as Jannock thought, the abduction of two of our remaining mules—from this vagrant and formidable clan; the deep snow having doubtless had a repressive influence even on Crow vagabondism.

As this, however, began to melt towards the end of February, we held ourselves in readiness for their unwelcome visits, and while setting about preparations for our departure, took care to maintain a more rigid watch in respect to both ourselves and animals.

The capture of the bear, related in the preceding chapter, terminated our worst trials in the fasting line, both elk and black-tailed deer appearing shortly after on the hills, and affording a fair return for our venatorial labours.

The little valley having at length become clear of snow, we turned out our horses daily, under guard, to acquire something of strength and condition ere putting them to further service.

Now the peeping blade and bursting bud—types of the lovelier hopes reviving in us—presented their cheerful forms, whilst the songs of innumerable birds mingling with the various notes of the brute creation, and noise

of waters swelled by melting snows, sounded on every side the 'reveille' of o'erslept nature.

One little alloy there was to the enlivening prospects we indulged in, but which it was trusted would be only transitory. Symptoms of dysentery began to appear among us, induced, perhaps, by the constant use, through the winter, of snow water as a beverage, and affected more or less nearly every member of the party. Robin—his constitution being less seasoned than the rest — was the greatest sufferer from this cause; to such a degree, indeed, at length, as to be wholly disqualified from rendering anything like active service.

By a little additional care as to diet, it passed away in a short time from the rest of us, who now busily betook ourselves to making the last arrangements for our onward journey. Our stores, with small exception, having run out, there would have been little further need of the waggon even if we had had means of drawing it, but possessing only a single

surviving mule, its abandonment became matter of necessity.

The provision we had latterly been able to lay in, and ammunition were divided equally among us, whilst our solitary mule, converted into a pack animal, was made useful in carrying a light tent we had constructed out of the waggon tilt, and a few utensils required for daily use.

At the beginning of March we accordingly fared forth once more upon our enterprize, each man clad in his leathern hunting skirt, leggings and moccasins; his well used rifle (I may here mention I had again become possessed of a very good one—a deathbed gift of the unfortunate Spaniard) resting on his saddle bow; a wallet filled with necessaries at his back, and his store of ‘provant’ bestowed as commodiously as might be on that of his horse; winding in Indian file, and at a slow pace through the various passes in a course, as near as we could lay it, due West towards the head waters of our old friend the Platte.

For the first two or three days the country was so broken and impracticable (in many parts still covered with snow) and our animals in such poor condition, that it was deemed best to proceed by but short stages. Getting gradually inured to their work, and the ground improving, we by degrees made better progress, and were even calculating with some nicety the number of days it would yet take to reach the mountains, when Robin, who had been from the first scarce able to sit his horse, became so seriously ill, that it was found necessary to halt on the banks of a bright stream we had arrived at, and defer our further journey till we had done what we could for his recovery.

The river was well fringed with willows and poplars, and bordered on either side by grassy plains, offering excellent pasturage for our still gaunt and drooping cattle.

Setting to work with our knives we soon cut down sufficient brush to form a temporary hut, in which our patient was deposited,

attended with all care, and supplied with what comforts could be raised from our meagre means.

Though this untoward incident both delayed and unhinged our plans, we resigned ourselves to it as unavoidable, and set about improving the occasion by renewing our stock of meat from the herds of deer and antelope that swarmed about us.

Here, for upwards of a month, the precarious condition of our comrade compelled us to remain stationary, and I had consequently ample leisure for considering our position and prospects in all their bearings.

We were now approaching the goal of our long journey, after many weary months of labour, privation, and peril, but the little that remained before us was by far the most hazardous part of all.

The tract of country that skirts the Rocky Mountains in this latitude is emphatically the battle field of the red men; in particular of the predatory and rival tribes of Crows and

Blackfeet; the former whom we have already had occasion to mention more than once, and whose enmity indeed lately suffered from, being a race of horsemen, pursuing their vocation in the plains, while the latter, equally redoubted for savage prowess (which we were soon more than equally to rue), for the most part frequent the high ground along the mountain skirts, eschewing the use of horses as less suited to the nature of their warfare, which is peculiarly one of ambush and surprise.

Stationing their scouts on every commanding point, it is difficult for either friend or foe to pass through their country undiscovered, and this being the very centre of Indian barbarism, should it be our ill luck to fall in with them, the meeting would be tantamount to a fight for our scalps and lives, in which case, with a party too weak to maintain even an ordinary guard without undue taxation of its strength, it would require no wizard to tell the issue.

Eventually, it would, of course, be needful to confront these fierce marauders, negociation with whom was indispensable for the attainment of our main object, but we wished to defer the interview till, under the partial protection of some trading post, and meetly appointed from its stores, we might hold it with every aid for ensuring a favourable result. Until then we cherished a fervent hope our 'dangerous cousins' would give us as wide a berth as possible.

The buffalo had begun to shew themselves about our camp ere we were yet quite ready to renew our march, and when Robin's slow recovery at length enabled us to do so, it was with a considerable addition of weight in the shape of good dried meat, got at much risk, and husbanded with proportionate care.

After traversing the grassy plains I have spoken of, the country became again broken; hills began to cross our course, alternating with sullen glens, rocks interspersed once more with forest trees—and sandy and sage

grown tracts of desert, succeeded by ever narrowing belts of pasture.

On the third or fourth evening of our resumed journey after a prolonged fall of rain the clouds began to lift, and in the western horizon we beheld for the first time, clearly drawn against the sunset, signs of the long desired region we were bound to, in the silvery foreloom of the Wind river range.

So rejoiced were we at the auspicious sight, that though yet several hazardous days' travel distant, we impulsively spurred forward our flagging steeds as though to annihilate the interval by the simple process of volition. The poor animals, however, soon brought us back to reason by relapsing into their usual plodding pace, and in this guise, wiling the way by remarks on the scene before us, we were jogging along through a patch of wood, when one of the Delawares, who had pricked ahead in pursuit of an elk, was seen riding swiftly back, making signals of alarm as he did so.

On coming up he reported that having

pushed somewhat unguardedly through the wood into the open ground beyond, he had discovered a number of Indians engaged in hunting buffalo, and, though retreating instantly on having done so, yet partly feared he had been descried by them.

At this intelligence it was resolved to remain stationary in the woody cover we had reached, water being ready at hand for refreshment, and a fair day's journey having been already made. Dismounting accordingly, we proceeded as noiselessly as possible to make the usual preparations for a night's camp, picketting the horses close at hand, and placing two men as guards over them.

Antoine had just given the last turn to the buffalo steaks, and we were on the point of sitting down to a hasty but necessary meal, when our scouts rushed in giving the alarm we were more than half prepared for, of Indians approaching. The sound of galloping hoofs upon the forest sward shewed it was well founded, and that they were bearing down on

us at a rapid rate. Using all possible expedition the cattle were instantly brought in again, the party put under arms, and the next moment we found ourselves surrounded by at least a score of wild, whooping, unknown savages.

Their sharp eyes, ever on the pry, had no doubt espied Pegtop in his incautious sally from the wood, and the subsequent appearance of our smoke supplied all that was wanting to inform their quick senses of our whereabouts.

At first matters wore as ugly an aspect as they well could, the Indians, who were all in their war paint, coming on with loud menacing yells and arrows ready fitted to their bows, whilst on our own side was heard that boding tick of the rifle lock so often the precursor of strife and death.

At this juncture, when our lives (to use the common trope) hung upon a hair—for untrenched and outnumbered as we were, there could be little doubt as to how the fray would

have gone, Swiftfoot fortunately recognized a former acquaintance in the ranks of the adverse band, whom he confidently pronounced to be neither Crows nor Blackfeet, but a troop of Bannecks, whom by the exercise of a little tact and forbearance we might readily dispose to friendly intercourse, the tribe being generally considered well inclined to the whites.

Eagerly availing ourselves of this advisement, we lost no time in offering the needful overtures, invited our wild visitors to take their seats at our fire, and plying them well from our waning store of tea and tobacco, speedily had the satisfaction of seeing matters placed on the amicable footing we desired.

After a good hour's confabulation, during which we learned to our dismay that the Blackfeet, on whose trail the Bannecks had been hanging, were out in force on the mountain skirts ahead of us, our formidable visitors remounted their horses, and bade us a blunt but friendly farewell.

Their conduct left on our minds a decided impression in their favor till the advent of the morning light, when on looking up our scanty stock of moveable property, we found at least one half of it had disappeared. However, we had saved "corps" if not "biens," and on the whole congratulated ourselves on having got rid of our wild guests even on these terms.

Shortly after day break we crossed the little plain that had been the scene of the buffalo hunt, finding the earth strewed with the mangled remains of hundreds of these persecuted animals, which the wolves had already got to work upon, and with the aid of the Turkey buzzards, would probably pick clear and clean before another sunrise.

In the afternoon we took our leave of the pleasant stream that had hitherto served for our guide—the Sweetwater—its course now deviating from that we proposed to follow.

The spot where we thus parted from it was fixed on as a place of future rendezvous in

the event of any unforeseen mischance compelling a separation of the party.

The mountains now loomed larger and larger every mile as we approached the pass by which we were to cross them; yet from the great, though imperceptible elevation of the "terrain" out of which they spring, failed to impress at least myself with the sense of sublimity one is apt to associate with great altitude.

On the second night after our meeting with the Bannecks, we were lying encamped in a retired nook at the base of the ascent, taking the last mouthfuls of our supper, when Robin who had happened to stray towards the entrance, declared he had seen the figure of an Indian furtively following up our trail. This was ungrateful tidings, as, though the prowler would in all probability be alone, yet we were led to think from the information lately given us by the Bannecks, the odds were ten to one he was a Blackfoot, and the rest of his party at no great distance off.

Our intention of encamping was therefore changed, instead of which, after finishing supper, we got in our horses silently, threw some fresh fuel on the fire, and as soon as it grew dark enough to hide our track, went on for some miles further, where a spot offering, equally suitable both for defence and concealment, we again quietly established ourselves, making no fire, and passing the night without molestation.

The whole of the next day was spent in affecting our passage over the first range of hills which here form the vanguard of the Rocky Mountains proper, and towards night-fall drew up in a deep valley densely wooded on either side, and having a fine stream of water tumbling along sonorously through it.

CHAPTER V.

WE had calculated on arriving the following day at a temporary post of the fur traders, situate in the hunting grounds of the tribe who — as we were led to believe from the information we had received — had the kidnapped child in keeping, and congratulated ourselves on the good fortune which had enabled us to reach our present stage, with our numbers undiminished and prospects as bright as ever.

Too little mindful, it might be, of the All-ruling power which had hitherto so signally protected us, and on whom it yet behoved us to





rely for future support and ultimate success, we began to entertain a sottish confidence in our good stars, to look upon our arduous mission as accomplished, and feel a strong disposition to eat, drink, and be merry, instead of heedfully collecting ourselves for the one stroke more that was to crown our labours.

This ill-timed recklessness—in great part, I believe, the effect (experienced by others than ourselves) of the high and exhilarating mountain atmosphere—was soon to meet with a crushing check.

As the night we have arrived at was destined to prove what may be called the turning point of our enterprize, and, in its consequences, forcibly illustrative of the ways—at once mysterious and merciful — of Providence, I will endeavour to relate its incidents with as much particularity as may be.

It was late when we took up our night's quarters in the bosom of the little valley I have spoken of, having killed an elk on entering it, the cutting up of which — being in

want of a supply of meat — had caused us some additional delay.

Unscathed as yet by the heats which so furiously beat upon these valleys at a later season, a narrow belt of pasture lined the rivulet, closely hedged in by the woody breasts before mentioned, and only here and there where the stream took an unusual "trend" to one side, affording sufficient space for the accommodation of our little troop. On one of these grassy bays we at last drew rein by the dim twilight—the starry host alone, in these regions of surpassing brilliancy, being all there was as yet to light us. Dismounting then ourselves, equipage, and provision, on the creek, we beat down its dew-sprent herbage and lost no time in lighting the needful fire.

Antoine, exulting in his recent acquisition of "provant," bustled about his cooking operations with more than his usual alertness, and the rest of us, stimulated by the savoury rewards he was preparing, set about our several

duties (unsaddling and securing the horses, &c.,) with a diligence that soon brought them to an end.

After paying due homage to the elk steaks that were by that time ready, each worthy got out his pipe, and bestowing himself in the posture most agreeable to him, wound up a day of hard travel by an hour or two of conversation, jest, and song.

Pegtop alone, of the whole group, seemed unusually serious and preoccupied, keeping aloof from the fire, and wearing an air of watchfulness that earned him many a gibe from the more light-hearted members of the company.

Whilst thus enjoying ourselves in the approved backwoods fashion, the form of some animal—a wolf or dog, apparently, was observed by some of us gliding about the skirts of the camp, which, on Swiftfoot giving it a call, came up and allowed itself to be handled. It proved to be an Indian dog in very poor condition, and had been doubtless attracted to

our camp by the savoury smell that issued from it. As this seemed all that could be made out of the matter, I tossed the creature a bone, left it free to stay or go as it pleased, and gave the incident no further heed.

Not so, however, the moody Pegtop, who, pointing to the intruder, as it ravenously discussed its morsel, said in a warning voice: "Blackfoot dog, dat; Blackfoot no far off." Bryce Jannock directing our attention to its condition, remarked that it was nearly starved, and must long have wandered from its master, if indeed it ever had any; to which the Delaware replied by pointing to its neck, where the hair seemed somewhat frayed as by sleigh harness, and repeating his original bode.

Inspired by the careless confidence I have before spoken of, we did not allow his misgivings to affect us, but piling some more fuel on the fire, laid ourselves presently down with the exception of Robin and Antoine, who were amusing themselves with a game of cards, to take our natural rest.

I had not yet composed myself to sleep, but was lying listening to the pleasant murmurs of the plaining stream and sighing woods, with my eyes fixed on the moon, just heaving into sight over the mountain top, when Jannock came up to me, and said in a low voice: "Squire, that dog's here yet; there may be so'thin' in what Peg said, arter all; I don't half like the critter's ways; it's going round and round arter a queer fashion."

"They always do so, Bryce," replied I, philosophically, turning my gaze from fair Luna to the woodsman's broad, grave visage; "they always go round after their tails, I've noticed, before settling down to rest; Aristotle I believe, hasn't given the reason, but I suppose it's as a guest follows the chambermaid, to make sure of a warming pan; Bran, here, does the same, and so, no doubt, should you and I if we enjoyed a similar appendage."

"Aye," returned Bryce, not at all disposed to join in my pleasantry, "but this critter ain't progressing a that way at all; it's

drawing rings round *us humans*; looker how it goes—”

“Ha—ha—yaw,” yawned I, raising myself up “so it does ‘*Siehst du den schwarzen hund durch saat und stoppel streifen?*’”

“Mark how sidelong it coasts round Robin, and see how its eyes glimmer; massy! d’ye think it’s in the flesh?”

“Swouns! yes, and so am I, prythee don’t squeeze so hard; it’s both in the flesh, and the flesh is in it, as your own eyes can testify; what the dickens, man, d’ye think a ghost could crack a marrow bone?”

“Drat me,” rejoined the hunter savagely, “if I wouldn’t try a bullet on its carcase, if it warn’t for fear o’ wakin’ wuss snakes; who knows but it may be some medicine bogle of the Blackfeet? I’ve heard of such things.”

“*Du siehst ein hund und kein gespenst ist da’.*”

“You may spout latin by the gallon, squire, but neither latin nor greek would save our bacon, let me tell ye, if the inimy were

outlying in these woods, within pitchpenny of us; we'd be smashed like egg shells; yon scouter, the other night may have fallen in with his fellow varmints, who could easily have headed us through passes well bekown to them, and for all the quiet look of yon birken copse, there they may be ambushed at this moment, for anything we know to the contrary. I reckon it will be as well to put the fire out, so you had better wrap your blanket about you, for the dew's comin' down like a Boston watercart."

Accordingly, taking up the camp kettle, he filled it with water from the rivulet, and was in the very act of throwing it on the tell-tale blaze, when a volley of rifle shots followed by a burst of yells broke from the suspected cover, and the next moment a cloud of demonlike figures were seen by the faint moonlight, rushing with rapid bounds over the open, towards us.

I was so utterly astounded at this sudden and frightful interruption, that I stood for some

moments motionless, during which interval I observed the figure of the unfortunate Canadian stretched lifeless on the ground, Robin standing by it, the counterpart of my own confusion, and the two Delawares dart over the brook towards the woods on the opposite side.

This short delay had allowed the savages to come nearly within striking distance, and a few minutes more would assuredly have settled my worldly affairs for ever, when I felt my arm seized by Bryce Jannock, who crying out as he did so "to cover! to cover! follow the Delawares," darted over the water in the direction taken by the latter.

Thoroughly aroused now, from my trance, I followed him at my best speed, with two or three whooping savages hard behind, and plunged into the first thicket that presented itself, the whistle of a tomahawk passing my ear as I did so, showing how narrowly I had escaped my pursuers.

Behind me were then heard (an evil omen

for poor Robin) the sounds of a conflict as though in the water, mingled in infernal concert with the continued yells of the assailants, the angry baying of the bloodhound, the galloping and snorting of our terrified steeds, and one or two dropping shots from our own side.

The enemy were evidently numerous ; appearing, indeed, from the noise they made, to fill the glen, and beset the entire skirt of wood through which I was escaping.

Guiding myself in part by these sounds, I made along the mountain side, as well as the darkness would allow, towards the further end of the valley, pausing ever and anon to listen for any sign of my companions or the pursuing foe. More than once I caught the sound of persons forcing their way through the brushwood, but uncertain whether they might be friend or enemy, deemed it wisest to abstain from hailing them.

At length all grew silent, with the exception of an occasional distant whoop, and I

resolved on halting till daylight, when I hoped to make my way to my party.

The anxiously awaited morning at last appeared, and imagining from the noises I had heard overnight my companions must have been left in my rear, I cautiously retraced my way in the direction I had come the night before. Passing along a natural path that led to a little open glade, partly illuminated by the early sunbeams, I descried the lower limbs of an Indian, whose face was still hidden by the foliage, but whose erect, arrow-like form seemed so much to resemble that of Swiftfoot, that I heedlessly ventured upon hailing him.

A most unlucky hail it proved. Three or four additional pairs of red limbs became immediately visible, assuring me of as many enemies. I had fallen on a knot of out-lying Blackfeet, who instantly dashed forward with a loud yell towards me.

The moment I perceived my error I darted

aside from the path into the denser bush, and made at my best speed (never had it been more needed) up the mountain side.

It being still too dark in the forest shade to follow me up by tracking, the only guidance they could have for doing so was the rustling of the foliage as I pushed my way through it, and as here and there open spaces intervened where I was able to avoid this, they were at length thrown off my trail, when instead of continuing my ascent up the height, I resumed my original course along its side.

Reaching, after a little time, a bare shoulder of the mountain which offered an open view for some distance round, I then stopped to rest awhile, being nearly spent, still keeping, however, a vigilant look out about me.

Fortunate it was I did so, for I had not been long set down, when, slowly following on my track, though still at a considerable distance, my hunters again appeared in sight.

Trusting they might not have espied me, I once more took to flight, making over the

rocky shoulder in the hope of finding some available cover on the other side.

Here, however, a wide stony gulley was all that met my view, destitute of even a shrub, and tapering off in utter barrenness towards the mountain top, where it ended in a mere hole, which was the only spot within ken that offered even the semblance of a hiding place. Poor as seemed the chance thus presented, it was not nevertheless to be thrown away, and all would now depend upon my being able to reach this point ere the savages should turn the rocky shoulder and have me again in view.

Stimulated by this consideration, it need scarce be said I strained every nerve to gain it, which breathless and bruised (for the slope being strewn with large stones the effort cost me several falls), I at length succeeded in doing ere the forms of my pursuers came again in sight, and instantly buried myself in the friendly aperture.

It proved to be a sort of natural culvert,

through which at one time must have issued the torrent that had worn the channel I had come up by in the mountain breast, but so narrow in its dimensions, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could force my way into it; nor was I yet quite sure my feet had cleared the entrance when the cries of the Blackfeet at fault over the stones reached my ears.

The reader may imagine the anxiety with which I listened to these sounds, and endeavoured by the sense of hearing alone to judge of the comparative chances of their penetrating my concealment or retiring baffled.

From the silence that for a time ensued I began to harbour hopes they had abandoned their quest as vain, when the illusion was unpleasantly dispelled by their voices again falling, and yet more audibly on my ears, impressing the persuasion on my mind that the undeceivable instincts of the savages would ultimately lead them to my detection.

Under the pressure of this feeling, casting

an anxious glance ahead of me to see if the tunnel would admit of further progress, my eyes now somewhat familiarized with its obscurity, discovered the glimmering of light at its upper end. Worming my way onwards by repeated efforts, I succeeded at last in reaching this point, and detaching with my hand one or two of the stones that formed its terminus. Through the opening thus made streamed a pure tide of daylight, and by renewing my exertions the hole was so far widened as to admit at length of the passage of my body.

On getting fairly through, a scene presented itself which it would exceed my ability to convey to my readers' mind, or, flushed as I was at the time by the glow of reviving hope, describe its effects even on my own.

I had broken through the crust of an ancient volcano, and stood within its extinct crater.

At my feet lay a still and limped pool—overhead stretched the azure heavens, and

around me swept a circular basin of rock, strewn with strange looking stones, glistening in the morning sunlight. Here from the day of its formation no human foot had ever trodden save my own; here no human eye, no eye perchance of living thing been cast, save mine and that of the solitary eagle which was soaring in the rare atmosphere above me.

The cavity where fire had once performed its work was now filled with water from some hidden source, the tunnel by which I had made my entrance having furnished the outlet for its overflow.

Though astonished at first sight by this wondrous scene, the critical nature of my situation forbade me from fully realizing it. The foemen might be yet at hand, on the watch outside, or even following me up into this choice shrine of solitude and rest. I therefore made it my first business to build up the screen of stones I had displaced, and as it was necessary to use the greatest caution in doing so, lest by any unlucky noise I might

betray my whereabouts to the Blackfeet, the labour took considerable time.

The tunnel being fortunately tortuous, they would be unable to see the light from the outside, and all danger of discovering it, as I had done myself, I took care to prevent by raising a pile of stones, proof both against eye and hand, in place of the flimsy screen I had broken thro'.

Then, for the first time, I sought the rest I was so much in need of, and placing my back against the barrier, with my rifle lying at my side, I presently sank into a profound sleep.

It was well on into the evening when I awoke amidst a blaze of light, the sun having now got round to the other side of the crater, and gradually recovering the consciousness of my situation, I made a more deliberate survey of a spot so calculated to arouse the most vivid emotions of the soul.

The margin of the pool at my feet was strewn with volcanic fragments—scoriæ, tufa, &c., and so exquisitely pure were its waters,

that it struck the eye rather like a piece of fallen firmament, than the tangible element it was; yet no sign of animated life appeared about it; there were no fish in its depths—no bird upon its shore—even insects were wanting to flutter in the air above, or trace their giddy mazes on its surface.

Yet, wholly destitute as was the scene, of derived life, God the eternal—omnipresent seemed here to be emphatically resident; here, as in his chosen temple, the soul felt lifted up in adoration of Him; here might it realize something of Adam's state, when, fresh from his maker's hands, he sought but Himself to commune with; here, amidst solitude and silence, seclusion and sublimity, might the stubbornest heart resign its will, and yield delighted homage to the Author of the Great and Good.

These, and such as these, were the sentiments and thoughts that filled my mind, as I beheld the pure sunshine fade at evening from the volcanic crest, and turned out to seek

some suitable retreat wherein to pass the night.

Tho' from the evenness of the encircling basin no place of peculiar shelter was discoverable, the air was so dry and pure I might have rested securely anywhere, but actuated by considerations more directly affecting my safety, I retired to my former sleeping berth; and passed the night by the key of my position at the tunnel mouth.

The whole of the next day I remained quiet and resting in my mountain lair, suffering not a little from hunger, but willing to endure even this if the delay might disengage me from my pursuers.

On the third day, however, having had nothing to subsist upon from the night of our surprise, but water and some scanty relics of dried meat gleaned from my pocket corners, I felt I should be starved into absolute debility if I held out any longer, and resolved to attempt my escape by twilight that same evening.

CHAPTER VI.

ACCORDINGLY, a little before sunset (my impatience causing me somewhat to anticipate the time) I cautiously removed the guardian stones, and, much after the fashion of a badger, emerged from my opportune hiding-place.

Displacing, while doing so, some cobbles near the outer entrance, I started a mountain hare from its form, and on examining the latter, discovered a young leveret, which I straightway made prize of, to fill, as far as it would go, the vacuum caused by my late fast.

Though somewhat a perilous position, I stopped for a few minutes here to set my course, and take a passing glance at the rich, though rude magnificence of the scene around.

The slanting rays of the sunset were shining full on the dry, grey mountain side, defining, more than half way down, every crag and pebble with almost preternatural distinctness. Below this line the twilight spread its gloom, and night seemed already nestling in the uncultured glen beneath ; but the light that had been thence withdrawn, was gathered in ten-fold glory in the heavens, which, painted with every conceivable hue of rose and purple, shed their elysian colouring on the heights around, burnished the solemn pine trees on their sides, and flushed even the paltry lichens at my feet with a brief and tinsel comeliness.

The scenery resembled that of the Black Hills, being equally wild and broken ; the same rude world of towering heights, gloomy glens, and trackless forests, which, darkening

as the daylight faded, began now to assume a drear, ominous, and savage aspect.

Having rapidly settled the general bearings of my course, I descended into the glen below (a different one from that where we had been attacked) hoping to find a more practicable path by the rivulet side at its bottom.

Aware I had but little more daylight to expect, I made what speed I could to reach it, but the declivity proved so long, and the timber so difficult to penetrate, that it was all but utter darkness, when the rippling of water at my feet, announced the termination of my descent. By the side of its murmuring current I then made a fire, and cooked the leveret I had taken, which being the first good meal I had had for several days, furnished me a much-enjoyed repast.

Lighting my pipe, after despatching it, I sat some time longer, listening amidst the deep stillness of the woods, for any sign they might betray of the neighbourhood of my late

enemies, or the now scarce less to be dreaded danger of wild beasts.

In these scarce trodden wilds where Nature is engaged in perpetual warfare, the firm nerves and vigilant senses of the wayfarer are the only guardians of his safety. Here the grizzly bear roams undisputed lord, and even where man may chance to cross his path, maintains his rights unflinchingly, contending against his human foe with even chances, and generally with results that uphold his terrible prestige.

Conscious that the position I had taken was such as he is well known to affect, and apprehensive of the probable propinquity of the Blackfeet, I kept awake and watchful for a length of time, till my fire having died away I was insensibly yielding to my drowsiness, when the cracking of a stick as though trodden upon, caught my ear. Alive as I now was to every sense of danger, I seized my rifle, and listened for a repetition of the noise.

Ere long, the sound of distinct footfalls became audible, apparently approaching.

In an instant I was on my legs, with my piece to my shoulder ; a short silence followed, then the bushes rustled close beside me, and bursting from the midst, a dark, tawny body bounded forth, at the same instant that I levelled and drew trigger upon it. The night air had, however, damped the priming, and the gun most fortunately missed fire ; I say most fortunately, for I was thus saved the sorrow and remorse of sacrificing my faithful bloodhound Bran. Poor fellow, he was already in but evil case ! It was not long after our recognition that I discovered an arrow in his side shackling his movements, and forcing an involuntary howl through his whine of joy.

It had passed through a portion of his flank, which was much inflamed from the constant dangling of the shaft. The vital parts, however, appeared uninjured.

Relieving the poor creature of its grievous

appendage, by means of an incision but skin deep, I made little doubt of its coming speedily round, formed it a lair of grass near my own, and felt no little satisfaction as I lay down, in the thought that I had gained, however humble, a trusty friend and right useful guardian.

Rising as the East was reddening over the mountain tops, I directed my course down stream, being anxious to disengage myself from the hills and reach our appointed rendezvous at the Sweetwater, wending my way in the meantime in much disquietude as to the fate that might have befallen my companions.

So engrossed indeed was my mind with this subject that I was within a little of missing a chance of a fine shot at a herd of deer crossing a shallow of the river a little distance in my front. The main body had already got clear ere I could bring my gun to bear, but an unfortunate year old buck that had been frisking too far in the rear, fell to my

bullet as it was following them. On this myself and Bran made a hearty breakfast, and cutting off what I could of the remaining meat, slung it about me for further use.

When fairly engaged in the depths of a rugged country, the work of extrication is not easy, but I had little doubt by bearing steadily in the direction I had originally laid for myself I could have reached the open ground ere nightfall of the next day, had not signs now vague, now too distinct, of the neighbourhood of Indians, enforced constant deviations from my course.

The evening of the second day found me still involved among the mountains wandering, I knew not whither, through a winding valley, when I suddenly beheld a column of smoke rising from a thicket some half mile or so ahead. Reconnoitring the spot with my glass, I made out a small party of Indians, probably Blackfeet, and instantly sought cover in the mouth of a lateral dell I had just passed.

Into this I pushed for some miles, and here it was, while preparing to camp for the night, I first beheld two of the dreaded monsters I had heard so much of.

At the other side of the narrow stream that watered it, and not far from the place I had chosen for my lair, there was a group of willows in which I thought I detected signs of breakage and displacement. The wind being in my favor I concealed myself near the spot, and watched if anything should come of these unusual indications. It was not long ere I beheld a huge bear of the grizzly kind walk forth on to the bank, look up and down the stream suspiciously, and, being presently joined by its mate, retire with her along the waterside in the direction I had come. They had probably heard my footsteps, or detected a tainted flaw, and, it being mealtime with them, thought to make the most they could of the advertisement. They were truly grim and grizzly creatures, and, as they went off prowling amid the gathering

shades of night, loomed on the sight like some of the more horrid incarnations of the evil principle.

Determined to lay a good space of ground between myself and my ill-favored neighbours, I pushed on some miles further, and at length worn out with toil, halted among a group of middle sized firs, where, if suddenly set upon during the night by the savage brutes, I might find security by climbing. It however passed by undisturbed.

The following day was destined to afford me a still closer interview with them. I had eaten all my deer's-meat, and was approaching about noon, a spot on the river side which looked like a repair for game, when on nearing a thorny thicket in which I proposed to hide myself for a shot, I fancied I descried through the light foliage, the outline of a huge head.

My distance from it was about twenty yards, and I had left a small clump of wild cherry trees about eighty paces in my rear.

Aware of the sort of customers I had about me, I stopped but a moment to assure myself of the truth, and then ran back at my utmost speed towards the friendly timber, at the same instant that the bear rushed forth with a loud growl in pursuit. It was a short but fearful race. I dared not look behind me for fear of losing ground, and on reaching the first of the trees which luckily proved of suitable girth, I made a spring nearly my own height up its bole, not knowing but even that last act of agility might be arrested by the clutch of my grim pursuer; in the instant after I found myself in safety. The animal had reached the tree, to use a witticism, just in time to be too late, and I knew Ephraim was no hand at climbing.

On coming up, he snuffed at the rifle I had thrown down at the tree foot, and then after sundry growls and display of tusks, fell incontinently to scratching and digging with his huge paws at its roots. Such is the tremendous strength of the brute, that I verily believe could

not his proceedings have been stayed, he would have had it down at length and enjoyed his morsel after all; but at this juncture the brave but ill-starred Bran commenced a vigorous attack upon his haunches, which immediately diverted his attention to himself. The poor dog, weakened by its recent wound, was instantly caught up in the monster's clutch, and a half-stifled howl of anguish sounded the death-knell of my staunch and well-trying follower. By this I had got out my long pistol—too late, alas! to save the faithful beast, and fired shot after shot into the bear, whilst busied in his murderous work, which compelled him at length to desist, when he again came up to the tree grinding his tusks, and filled with redoubled fury. In this position I was able to take more deliberate aim, and a ball through the ear at last terminated his vicious antics, stretching him dead by the side of his nobler victim.

Filled with much grief at his untimely end, I made for poor Bran a grave at the foot of

the cherry tree, and after cutting off some meat from my huge game, resumed my route up the narrow glen.

In a few hours more I reached its end, which proved to be of that unsatisfactory formation called a "cul de sac." It was in fact one of those stupendous natural quarries characteristic of the Rocky Mountains, where topless cliffs frown down on the intruder, forbidding further passage, and appalling him in his futile search for it, with their dread Medusæan aspect.

Here no living creature—no leaf of tree or blade of grass were to be seen—no feathered warbler broke the oppressive stillness; even the mechanical sounds of the purling rill were wanting, and the huge and tomb-like blocks of freestone that strewn the forbidding area completed its picture to the fancy as the temple of solitude and desolation.

I speedily turned my back on its silent terrors, and retracing my course for some half mile or so, commenced an ascent of the

range with the intention of forcing a way over the summit, till a valley should be met with stretching in a suitable direction, viz., towards the east.

On reaching the top I found another deep dell, with a precipitous though broken descent, immediately beneath me, and another long mountain slope similar to the last in front. Into the former I descended with much difficulty, letting myself down from rock to rock, and had half mastered the opposite ascent when daylight failed, and compelled me to take up my quarters by a small spring of water I had luckily fallen on.

The next day was spent in the arduous labour I had entered on, of forcing my way between, where practicable, and over, where not, the stupendous heights of the Wind river chain, the elevations of which increased as I proceeded, till at length I reached the roots of a mountain whose crest was whitened with perpetual snow. Steadfast in the purpose I

had formed of keeping eastwardly as long as possible, I commenced the ascent over its shoulder, and after several hours labour attained what I conceived to be the highest part I had to traverse.

Here I stopped to rest, and from this lofty station beheld a prospect such as fancy may indeed suggest in dreams, but which neither pen nor pencil would avail to give even a faint idea of. I looked on either hand, on a limitless array of mountains, stretching away into the distance like a tumbling sea of land billows. Within a circuit of near fifty leagues their most secret recesses were exposed to view. Beneath me appeared the black defile, the gloomy glen, the broader valley, and isolated mountain mead, all laid out as on a map, and astonishing the mind with their new, strange and infinitely varied features.

In some of the nearer mountains were seen, locked up in rocks, miniature realms of untouched and undreamt of beauty—little airy

Edens clothed with enchanting verdure, studded with fairy groves, and glistening with sky-blue lochs, waiting, as it were, the occupancy of some diviner denizen than man, whilst dashing down their craggy sides rushed rills of purest water, swelling even beneath the ken into goodly streams, and under the names of the Sweet-water, Wind-river, Yellowstone, Columbia, and Colorado, destined to carry life, commerce, and civilization through a continent.

It was truly a panorama of new and unimaginable grandeur, but I looked at it worn and weary, my clothes torn to rags, my feet bleeding with rough travel, and my mind full of anxiety for the fate of my companions, myself, and my enterprize. My inspection was but of a short duration, and knowing I had now reached the apex of the mountain range, and my journey to the plains likely to be less difficult, I was filled with impatience to conclude it.

Descending however the other side of this mountain, my steps were abruptly checked by a tremendous line of precipice, which, save by reascending as I came and undoing half a day's work, I could discover no means of getting past. It was some hundred feet sheer down, stretching away undiminished to my left as far as I could see.

To the right was a ravine, deep cut in the rock, looking like a Cyclopean ditch, running at right angles to the precipice, and being of about the same depth, obstructing also further passage in that direction. Remembering I had passed a brook some few miles back which appeared to flow into this ravine, and might possibly afford access to it, I retraced my steps thus far, and on careful examination thought that through the passage it had worn for itself in the rock, a descent might, by using great caution, be effected. Slinging my rifle on my back, I accordingly let myself down into the watercourse, splashed along

shallows, waded through deep pools, and with infinite difficulty mastered the many falls that broke its channel.

Eventually the descent was accomplished, and I then hastened to traverse the ravine it had led to ere night should lock me up within its dank and chilling walls.

It proved to be of but little width, scarcely broader indeed than a metropolitan sewer, to which its resemblance was strengthened by its serving as conduit to the rivulet whose channel I had descended by.

Through this extraordinary natural canal I waded for nearly two miles, the water being seldom more than shoe tops deep, when, to my great delight, I beheld the bright sun shine in my front, and issued from the gloomy fissure into a wild and stony mountain dell. This was of the narrow dimensions common in this elevated region, encumbered with freestone boulders on its higher slopes, and overstrewn below by a drifted mass of pebbles

through which stole the crystal stream whose aid I had been lately beholden to.

Having unslung my piece and rested a few moments from my toil, I continued my way along its side, the sun being at my back, lighting up the rugged pass with its rich and parting radiance.

As the traveller wends his way through these desert glens, whose tranquillity seems unbroken by aught but elemental turmoil, he cannot divest himself, however hardy, of a certain presentiment of danger. Whilst the grandeur of their scenery astounds, the quietude that wraps it mystifies, and he involuntarily prepares himself to meet with and repel an enemy.

I had scarce left a mile of ground behind me, ere I came upon a scene which shewed how fully these secret presages are justified.

The sun had already passed the parallel of the little glen leaving it in shadow, and I was on the point of halting for the night when a

thin line of smoke became observable, stealing up against the rocks at no great distance in my front.

Prompted by the wary feeling I have mentioned, I got out my glass and examined the suspicious spot. There I beheld three wild looking savages, different in appearance from any I had yet seen, seated round a fire, and engaged, after their primitive fashion, in satisfying the wants of nature.

They were evidently some of that shy sept of the Shoshonee nation I had before heard something of, which haunting the more inaccessible parts of the mountains, are seldom met with by white men, and from their inoffensive habits, generally exempt from their attacks. Not so, however, from those of their savage neighbours, who ruthlessly and incessantly pursue them, like the wild sheep that share their haunts, for the sake of that coveted and barbarous trophy, the scalp. Having satisfied myself of their harmless character, I had made up my mind to join them, when it oc-

curred to me, it might be as well to examine the neighbourhood of their camp, to ascertain whether these might form the whole of the party. Fortunate it proved I did so. My glass had been scarcely turned on to the adjacent hill side, when, from my elevated post, I perceived, lurking behind rocks, a band of eight or ten low-land Indians, closely watching the wild men at their meal, and apparently on the point of rushing out upon them. In but a few minutes afterwards the horrid warwhoop sounded in my ears, reverberating thro' the rocky dell like the voices of answering demons, and the ambushed band burst forth with brandished tomahawks on the surprised and affrighted Shoshonees.

Taken at disadvantage as they were, there seemed to be little chance of escape for them.

Two I saw instantly captured without resistance, whilst the third fled swiftly up the glen towards me, with three or four enemies hard behind him.

His activity might yet have saved him, had not the formation of the ground presented a hindrance to his flight. Not many yards below me a sort of ledge or dyke ran across the pass, about seven feet in height which though easily surmountable in parts if leisure served, frowned like the page of doom upon the poor fugitive, whose enemies were already nearly within striking distance. As he neared it, I could see his eyes casting anxiously about in the futile quest for some passable part, and impelled by pity for his extreme strait, I rose, without reflecting, to aid him. He had made towards a waterfall in the centre, formed by the mountain rill I have mentioned, as the likeliest place to offer passage, and the foremost of his pursuers had raised his weapon to cleave his head, as he attempted it, when, levelling my piece at the latter, I tumbled him to the earth with a shot through the body. The two others, not knowing the amount of force they had to deal with, stopped in their tracks, and then retreated, while the poor

runaway, taking advantage of the unexpected respite, made good his flight into the mountains.

It was high time for myself, it then occurred to me, to effect a similar movement, and availing myself of my elevated station, I succeeded in making my retreat unmolested, and as I thought, unperceived, though, in this latter supposition, it appeared from subsequent events, I was deceived.

After another weary spell of trudging and climbing, for which I was in but ill condition, I gained another range of heights, just in time to see the sun set over a waste of arid pinnacles, and then found myself forced by darkness to encamp there, with both hunger and thirst unappeased, and my spirits damped by the prospect of having to make a fresh detour on the morrow. Worn out however, by excessive exertion, I lay down as I was, and slept soundly.

In the grey twilight of the next morning I ventured to cross (slaking my thirst as I did so) the dangerous defile I had traversed the

day before, and after scrambling some hours over the opposite heights, came at length upon another that seemed to run parallel with it. Along this, devoutly trusting it might be less perilous, I took my way at a good pace, and by evening made out the best day's progress I had achieved since the commencement of my wanderings. At nightfall I must have been several thousand feet below my starting point, and was greatly gladdened by the milder aspect of the scenery, the mountain glen expanding into something like a grassy vale, and promising in another day's work to bring me fairly into the open plains.

Anxious to reach the appointed rendezvous I rose at early dawn, and found the auguries of yesterday happily realized, as I proceeded the steepness of the descent constantly diminishing, till at length, late in the afternoon, I found myself, to my boundless satisfaction, on a perfectly level plain, watered by a stream of ample volume, and delighting the jaded eye with the prospect of wide-spread verdure.

CHAPTER VII.

THOUGH thus happily extricated from the mountains I was yet far from esteeming myself in safety. I had seen, during my yesterday's descent smokes rising from the river banks, where the thickets that lined them were so dense, there was danger of stumbling at any moment on the lodges or outposts of the enemy.

My destination—the rendezvous—however, being well nigh within view, I boldly pushed along, with every sense on the *qui vive*, till, on nearing a new reach of river, the sound of human voices, which from their shrill,

treble tones seemed to be those of women, struck my ear.

Taking advantage of a clump of willows that lay at hand, and offered a suitable hiding place, I made my way therein, and laying down my rifle on the ground, with my knife cut out a peephole in the foliage, through which I obtained a view of the part from which the sounds proceeded.

The mountain brook I had followed almost from its sources, was now, as I have before mentioned, swollen into a fine, full-volumed river, and in its stream, here lacquered with yellow sunlight, there pleasantly speckled by its beams, filtered through the adjacent willows, a bevy of Indian maidens were disporting with the glee and "abandon" that usually attend a bathing scene.

Some were seen venturously swimming about in the deeper parts; others, splashing the water with ringing cries of merriment upon their comrades; and on the further side I observed several dusky figures, wearied of

their watery sport, ranging themselves with clamorous glee round a companion who had been quietly watching their operations.

Habited in a costume which, wholly barbaric as it was, had yet a certain air of pretension, she was sitting on the bank with her moccasins off, laving her feet in the running flood, and though taking no part in the noisy pastimes of her sisters, from their frequent and friendly challenges, seemed an object of marked observance to themselves. While some of the dark naiads wreathed fresh culled wild flowers in her hair, others came dripping from their bath to refer some girlish squabble to her judgment, whilst a few who yet lingered at their aquatic sports endeavoured by various antics to awake a smile upon her beautiful but thoughtful countenance.

From the thick woods behind them lines of blue smoke ascended above the evening mists already settling on the stream, and shouts were from time to time heard in the same direction.

Attracted apparently by these sounds, the wild companions disappeared by twos and threes from my view, leaving their interesting comrade sitting as before 'in maiden meditation' on the bank.

Now with vague movements of her feet she would ruffle the stream that washed them, now toy with some of the many flowers she had been decked with, and anon, as the wail of the evening breeze met her ear, she would turn to the sound in a sort of abstraction, and muse as though under the influence of memory, or communing in secret with some unseen and airy intelligencer.

Whilst thus engaged in watching her, a canoe came floating down in front, and had passed my station ere I was well aware of the circumstance. The doubt immediately came into my mind whether I might not myself have been observed by the two warriors who were in it—a doubt which, as the sequel proved, there was only too good reason for.

Fleeting on its course down stream the little bark speedily disappeared behind a point below, and yielding again to my curiosity I had turned to take a parting view of my savage Dorothea on the other side, when I suddenly felt the pressure of fingers on either arm, and found them the next moment pinioned in the gripe of two athletic Indians.

Resistance would have been worse than useless. My rifle lay some paces distant, and taken at advantage as I was, my knife and pistol—which I was soon deprived of—were unavailable. Making, therefore, a virtue of necessity I quietly surrendered to my captors, who leading me between them along the river bank, in the course of but a few minutes found themselves in front of their village. Here with a loud whoop they summoned several of their fellow-tribesmen — the tribe I found to my cost were Blackfeet — to their aid, by whom a canoe was shortly launched into the stream, which soon transferred us to the other side.

The village consisted of some twenty lodges, formed of buffalo skins stretched upon willow poles, and disposed without plan or regularity along a verdant flat, skirted half round by the river, so as to leave a spreading lawn of some six or eight acres in extent between them and it.

The encampment seemed to be of quite late formation, much of the grass around it being still untrodden, and bore the ephemeral appearance in keeping with the nomade habits of its founders—the tents planted at random among the trees having something of the aspect of huge fungi, the offspring of a summer's night, while the repellent odours that issued from them, and semi-brutish sounds of savage life came gratingly on my senses as I passed along.

On reaching the heart of the wild colony it became evident its population were labouring under some fresh and unusual excitement. A large crowd was collected before the lodge of the principal chief, and it was not without

some difficulty that my guards, who were bound thither, were able to make their way into it.

Night having by this, fallen, the interior was lighted up by a torch of pitch pine in charge of an aged squaw, and round this were gathered a throng of swarthy, grim-visaged warriors, some of the more privileged being seated on rude settles, inhaling the "kinnek-kinnek" from their tomahawk pipes, and all of them watching with ruthless gravity the countenances of two strange Indians, who had been just brought in captive, (it was this that had caused the shouts I had previously heard) and were now undergoing the examination which in their situation is generally the prelude to a cruel and not distant death. Wilder looking objects than these latter I had never yet beheld, though I thought the savages I had seen assailed in the mountains two days before, might have furnished fitting counterparts. In fact it was not long in occurring to me that these might be the very ones then

captured, and when I considered the part I had myself taken on the occasion, it was with no little uneasiness this impression fastened itself on my mind.

The entrance of so unusual a figure as a white man in bonds, immediately drew the general attention on myself, and whilst my two guards were relating in their uncouth jargon the circumstances of my capture, every eye in the lodge was turned in silent scrutiny upon me.

Beset as I was on every side by these ferocious beings, in whose breasts the impulses of mere humanity are unknown, and not certain but that among them might be found some who had witnessed my participation in the fatal strife which had cost them one of their warriors—isolated from all of my own colour and sympathies—from all who could offer either counsel or assistance; I began to feel my position graver than I had hitherto thought it, and despite my resolution to put a bold face upon the matter, the horizon of hope

since my entering the tent, narrowed and overcast considerably.

Neither did the idea which thus disturbed me, prove at all unfounded, for I soon became aware that, whilst by the greater part of those assembled I was regarded chiefly with an air of curiosity, there was one among them whose eye surveyed me with a more earnest gaze, and whose features were at length lighted up by a vindictive smile of recognition.

Well I knew its meaning, which touched the very core of my misgiving. In rapid and emphatic style he addressed the chiefs beside him, whose impassive countenances gradually assumed an expression of astonishment, and finally settled into one of determined vengeance.

Meeting all this on my own side with an air of confidence, I was very far from feeling, I demanded, in as plain English as I could, to know the reason of my seizure—pleaded the privileges due to the traveller and stranger, and claimed an immediate release.

My speech was received with a general and eager exclamation of "Yengee, Yengee!" mingled with the frequent use of the word "Kosata," the meaning of which was presently cleared up by the old Hecate who held the torchlight, and had been despatched for the purpose by one of the chiefs, returning into the tent with the identical maiden I had watched with so much interest on the river side, and whose charms had been in fact the virtual cause of my capture. From the repeated usage of the word, it appeared that "Kosata" was her name, while the "Yengee" I knew to be the national designation of myself.

The grave and grizzled chief, by whose order she had been summoned, then in a few brief gutturals gave her the instructions necessary for the part she was to take of interpreter, which having received with due submissiveness, as well as his opening interrogatory, she turned to where I stood, and in hesitating,

mutilated English proceeded to deliver its import to me.

She seemed scarcely yet to have attained the state of womanhood, her straight and well turned form being still short of its full development.

Her rich black hair, glistening with Indian unguent, fell in luxuriant folds upon her shoulders, but was so battened down upon her face and forehead after the fashion of her people, as to hide much of their natural expression.

On her delicately chiselled features browned by exposure, yet ruddy still with health, and in the large hazel eyes that lighted them, sat an air—strange and unwonted at her early years—of habitual thoughtfulness, as though her mind had already undergone its secret discipline, and been rendered proof against the giddy impulses and vivacious follies of her age.

She stood before me habited in a tunic,

reaching but a little below the knee, of blue traders' cloth, profusely and untastefully ornamented with red beads, leggings of whitened doeskin neatly fitting the limbs, and fancifully fringed down the exterior, while her feet were protected by moose leather moccasins, stiffened and decorated with various coloured quills. From her neck a little bugle made out of the horn of the "Ahsahta" or mountain sheep was suspended by a wampum baldrick, completing the idea suggested by her airy form and light attire, of a votaress of the Indian Dian.

Though strongly savouring of barbaric taste, her dress rather enhanced the native beauty of her person, and it was with a feeling of relief, not unmixed with admiration, that my eyes rested on her gracious countenance, where alone amidst that scowling throng the softer instincts of humanity seemed traceable.

Approaching me with the grave but unimpassioned air of one obeying a behest, whilst herself unconcerned in the result, she ad-

dressed me, pausing at every word to find out the next, as follows:—

“My father (pointing to the presiding chief) say—hearken Yengee. He say, why you hide at night by him village? He say, friend no hide, but come to wigwam and smoke. My father ask why you hide, and no come smoke.”

“Tell your father, if such he be, Kosata, to listen to my words, and he will listen to words of truth. Tell him I have come into this country from over the great Salt Lake to fulfil a vow to the Great Spirit; that only a few suns since, whilst going on my way to perform it, my camp was set upon by enemies who drove my party astray; that I have been wandering since in search of my companions, and was proceeding on my way to rejoin them, when his warriors seized me on the river bank.”

The fair interpretness after pausing a space to possess herself of the meaning of my speech carefully rendered it in Blackfoot to the crowd

of listening warriors, when a grave and ambiguous "hugh" was the general answer it elicited.

Having been lessoned anew by the old chief, whom, in courtesy or otherwise, she had called her father, Kosata returned to her duties, and in the same slow elective manner said :

"My father wish know why you come so far over Great Salt Lake to country of poor Indian."

"On a sacred service, as I have said ; to restore the daughter of a great white chief to her parent. If your father, Kosata, were to lose you, would he not shew friendship to him who should bring you back. Your father has a large heart, and will respect my errand. Tell him in me he sees no enemy, that I am neither trapper nor trader, that I seek no dealings in any way with his people, but wish only to pursue my path in peace."

Another exclamation of the same doubtful

character greeted my words, and an interval of some minutes succeeded, during which the three or four leading warriors were engaged in close and earnest conference. They then again summoned the maiden to her task, and their countenances assumed a stern denunciatory expression as they watched the effect of the speech she proceeded to deliver.

“My father say, Oh, Yengee, tongue speak one thing, heart (laying her little hand on her own), speak another; dat no good. My father say was it peace when you shot him young man, in the stony mountains three suns ago. He say, it no good him brother go alone on de death trail; de Yengee, and de Shoshonee go with him; he say, blood for blood—life for life.”

A hoarse and general murmur of assent arose as Kosata finished her short and fateful sentences, taken up and swelled into a truculent roar by the crowd without the lodge, which, even had I been able to make myself

understood would have prevented any effectual pleading against the ruthless verdict of my self-appointed judges.

Submitting myself, therefore, to the orderings of Providence, I followed the two Indians who had resumed charge of me, out of the tent, hoping almost against hope that my colour might yet in some way deter my captors from proceeding to the extremities they seemed to meditate.

In a casual glance I cast, as I went out, I fancied I saw signs of intelligence exchanged between my late interprestress and the two mountain Indians, my fellow prisoners, the countenances of the latter as they followed me to their fate being lighted by a sudden gleam of hope, and the former clasping her hands, and looking upwards as though in mute appeal to a higher Power.

The place appointed for my custody was an insulated rock in the river, at the point of the tongue of land which held the Blackfoot village, and separated from it by a very nar-

row channel, across which a few stepping stones furnished a precarious passage. At the other side flowed the main volume of the stream, in a deep and furious rapid, impracticable to the strongest swimmer.

The rock had something of the appearance of a round English haystack, its resemblance to which, was increased by the conical shaped hut that crowned it—at the present time in use as a medicine lodge.

Into this structure I was conducted by my two guards, and my bonds being examined anew, and fresh ones added—bound, in short, with painful tensity, both hand and foot, I was then left to the undisturbed reflection of my case.

This was, indeed, far from re-assuring. Ready trussed as a sacrifice to the vengeful passions of a heathenish horde, a sacrifice legalized by their customs, and too consonant with their nature to be easily relinquished, I felt the painful consciousness my mortal career was drawing to its close, and that the

necessity had become urgent for employing what little remained of it, in preparing myself for the great change I should soon have to undergo. The summons seemed as serious as it was sudden, yet I recalled (as I braced my mind to meet it), how many there were I had read of—nay, known—to whom it had been even more so; how many had had to bid adieu to life, their families, their friends, their riches, their aspirations, in a day—an hour—an instant, as fondly wedded to them as myself. The bitter pang came on them unavoidably; with it they passed away a few brief hours before their expected term by contingencies inherent to their lot, whilst Nature went on unchanged, nor recked their loss, more than the fallen leaf or fleeted shadow of yesterday. Would it not be better then, instead of embittering my fate by vain repining, to fall back at once on the hope of my Christian creed, and submit to the inevitable stroke with the stoicism of the race that were to inflict it?

Such were the cold suggestions of philosophy, but they were checked by a small insuppressible voice more potent still, which told me my life was yet of importance to myself, and that to abandon "the vocation wherewith I was called" to fulfil the ends and exchange the benefits of existence was not to be submitted to without a struggle.

In these inward strivings and reflections, to which the low murmurs of the stream kept meet accompaniment, I passed the night, lying on the cold rock, numbering, with a miser's carefulness, the few and slender chances of deliverance there might yet remain for me in common with all who draw the breath of life, even in its worst extremities.

Could I have released but an arm from my fastening, I might have made an effort at escape, by working a hole in the lodge side, and consigning myself and fortunes, rather, to the rushing flood below, than remain in the pitiless hands that were now too likely to dispose of them; but powerless in every limb,

and guarded by a watchful sentinel outside, who, by the light of a pitchpine torch, placed in the hut, could command my every movement; this source of hope, together with every other that suggested itself in a definite shape, vanished almost as soon as entertained.

When the sun shewed itself above the horizon the following morning, my guard entered the hut, and drawing my attention to the rising orb, slowly traced with his finger its course to the meridian, when seizing his tomahawk he made with it sundry cuts and passes in the air, which, to render yet more intelligible, he concluded by a gesture round his scalp-lock, and the utterance of the word "Shoshonee;" he then continued to mark the course of the luminary to another setting, rise and noon-tide, when he again stopped and went through his emphatic pantomime, illustrating it this time with the repetition of the word "Yengee." Having thus summarily set forth his meaning to the best of his power, he left me with a

grim leer upon his countenance to ruminate on the import of his lesson.

As the day wore on, there were signs abroad that seemed to show this was far from being intended for empty menace.

The hubbub of a gathering crowd, shouts of men and excited screams of women, came with fell significance on my ear, as the death-knell of my comrades in distress—the poor unfriended Shoshonees. To-morrow their fate would be my own.

Nature contended strongly against the thought, and yearned with futile craving for the comforting presence of some familiar friend, who, if life indeed was to be rendered up, might afford support in its final moments. How invaluable now would have been the company of the experienced Jannock, or the faithful Robin, unconscious both, of their friend's fate, nay, perhaps, equally unknown to him, themselves subjected to a similar one.

Though the distant noise seemed to be on

the increase, all remained still about my prison save, the voice of the ever-flowing river, as it rippled and plained round its rocky walls.

The sentinel himself appeared to have left his post, seduced by the irresistible fascination of the death scene.

Relieved in some sort by his absence, my mind cast about once more for some yet unthought of means of liberation. The vision of the Indian girl now presented itself to me. Could I but contrive to see her, there might, I thought, yet be hope.

As the idea warmed upon me, the sound of a light movement near the threshold struck my ear, and twisting my head in the direction, what should I behold but, just entered like an angel of light, the form of Kosata herself!

Gently closing the door behind her, she fixed her eyes sparkling with indignant emotion upon me, and thus remained without uttering a word, till a burst of yells reached

our ears, when holding up her finger with a warning air, and shaking her head in a way I could scarce interpret, she said in half-whispered tones, and the rapid utterance produced by high excitement, "Listen, white man! to-day Blackfoot kill de Shoshonee; to-morrow have de scalp dance for Yengee." Here the child of nature, in her excitement, enforced her speech by imitating the measure she alluded to, and as she did so the exquisite grace of her figure contrasted with the fell movement she executed, formed a picture at once interesting and grotesque.

The yelling from the distant death scene being renewed—

"Hear you dat," she continued, ceasing her movements, and placing her hands on her ears, "to-morrow shout so for Yengee; Kosata no like hear it; de Shoshonee her brother."

As she said this an emotion of unfeigned anguish filled her fine eyes with tears.

"If they be your brethren," I replied, "you may look on me as your brother, also, for that

I now lie here condemned to death is owing to my having saved a Shoshonee. Can you stand by, Kosata, and see your brother perish, when even with the thought you might set him free?"

"Then would Blackfoot kill, kill, kill Kosata; Blackfoot very fierce; kill and scalp Kosata."

"But might you not fly from them as well as I, maiden, and return to the people you belong to?"

"Ah! my people no much warrior; Blackfoot much warrior."

Here she paused awhile as though endeavouring to collect her thoughts, then said with a manner equally earnest and more confidential than before, "Listen, Yengee! many bad white men come to this country; trader, sell soul for beaver skin, trapper, shoot Shoshonee like deer, loafer, worse than wild beast for firewater; Kosata no love them, no trust them; tongue all forkee"—stretching out her two fingers—"You no dis," speaking half

interrogatively, "no bad white man. You come seek lost piccaninny, save Shoshonee not shoot him, love de Manitto. See now," glancing a look at the door to see that all was safe, "Kosata call you brother, cut your cord, go with you from here—so! You call Kosata sister, save her from harm; you help her back to her people—so!"

The reader will scarce need be told with what eagerness I laid hold of this proposal, made with the hesitating timidity, yet touching trustfulness of her sex, and how urgently I exhorted her to make no delay in executing it.

To this she replied "Softly! no good yet. Hearken, Yengee! Kosata find favour with Blackfoot, find favour with Wapiti, great chief Wapiti come guard you dis night, when moon rise he seek Kosata by yonder wood, Kosata come here then, then cut your cord, then take flight—so!"

After listening an instant at some sound that had alarmed her, and making a sign of

When morning, she repeated twice with emphasis, "When moon rise, Kosata come." She glided swiftly out of the lodge.

My guard shortly afterwards returned, and the rest of the day was spent in that anxious utter of reviving hope so naturally awakened by my unexpected interview, and when attended with doubt of its fulfilment so agitating an inmate of the human breast.

The outcries in the neighbourhood still continued unabated. The jubilee of be-lighted heathens over the immolation of hundred beings was yet in celebration by the scalp dance, when the cooler feel of the air and increasing gloom within the hut warned me the hour was nearing when my fate, resting on the caprice of an Indian girl, was to find its decisive settlement.

As an earnest of a favorable issue I perceived with a satisfaction difficult to express, a little before the time appointed, the place of the sentinel before my door had again become vacant. The first part of her plan then had

succeeded, and the love-lorn Wapiti was now probably waiting in some sequestered grove for the fair one who should gladden his eyes no more.

The darkness increased, the frogs began their chorus from a neighbouring lagoon, then through the chinks in the door the silver orb of the signal luminary became visible, and my suspense had reached a pitch that was becoming scarce endurable, when a soft voice from an unseen form whispered in my ear, whilst my ligatures gave way beneath her active knife—"quick, now my brother; Wapiti gone, but come back soon—rise—make track for mountain—come take Kosata to her people!"

My limbs had become so numbed with their confinement that it was with difficulty I could follow my conductress out of the lodge to the crossing stones, and take my seat in the canoe which had been already secretly moored there as our fittest means of flight.

With a forecast scarce to have been looked

for she had already purveyed some simple stores which had suggested themselves for our venture, and having darted past me to her station in the fragile craft, she motioned me to undo its lashing, and was soon guiding it with skilful hand down the rapid current of the Wind River.

CHAPTER VIII.

ERE I had drawn many breaths of my newly recovered freedom, or had time to address my thanks to my liberatress, I found we were nearing the thicket where I had been captured the night before, and where I entertained a hope my rifle, which I had laid down at the outskirts might have escaped the prying eyes of my captors. Directing her to the spot I was so fortunate as to find my trusty weapon uninjured save by the night dew, and though deprived of my powder horn and accoutrements, there yet remained stored in the butt the six or eight service charges

reserved for exigencies of this sort, which might be made, with care, to suffice till a fresh supply could be obtained. We then gave ourselves again to the current, floating along it for two or three miles, which as the river here described a curve, whilst it gave us greater offing from our enemies, did but little increase our distance from the high lands we instinctively made for as our surest refuge.

Having reached a convenient spot for landing, Kosata brought the canoe to the side, and loading myself with its scanty cargo, I swiftly followed her light figure on to the bank. Our situation was too critical to admit of talking. It could not be an hour—it might not be a minute ere our absence would be noticed, and the horde of savages we had fled from heard hue and cry on our trail.

We therefore pushed silently along at our best speed toward the mountains, my companion shaping our course as she listed, agreeably to our understanding, and both too intent on making progress to think either of

conversation or amusement. And thus we marched along through the dewy hours of a summer's night, our path illumined by a nearly full moon, till the first streaks of dawn appearing as we reached some high well-wooded ground, we deemed it a fitting occasion to call a halt.

The fair Indian seemed but little distressed by her march, and when she seated herself on the blankets I had laid for her settlewise under a branchy tree, it was more to commune with her own thoughts than recruit nature either by rest or reflection.

We dared not light a fire for fear of betraying our presence to our foes, but satisfied the cravings of appetite with some dried buffalo meat that formed part of our stores.

Kosata spoke but little. It was not, I felt assured, from any want of confidence in her companion, but the consideration of the many dangers that beset her defenceless sex and situation, naturally weighed upon her mind, and put even Indian fortitude upon the strain.

After finishing our slight repast, she said in her low musical tones (for she had that low soft voice "so excellent a thing in woman"), "My brother, you no tell me what you called by de Yengees; what your name among your people; me (pointing to herself) Kosata, you—"

"Philip, maiden; see, I will write the names upon this cherry tree, that you may know them by the eye as well as ear, and we will leave them as a souvenir for our friend Wapiti."

I accordingly carved her name with my penknife on the bark, and my own underneath it, while she bent curiously over me to get them by eye and heart.

This question, answer, and inscription formed in the then occupied state of our minds, the sum of our discourse and doings during that our first bivouack in the wilderness. She relapsed into silence which I forebore to break, knowing how indispensable it was for our safety, and that all our senses should be

kept on the alert to guard against the danger of surprise. My eyes nevertheless would occasionally wander from their more urgent duties to fasten on the wild attractive figure, which with hands clasped upon its lap, reclined like a resting Dryad near me.

A little before sunrise, nothing having occurred to cause alarm, we resumed our way, which I now found was leading to those very mountains whose difficulties and dangers I had so lately and painfully experienced. On questioning my fair guide as to her plans, and hinting my fears with respect to them, she replied with so much confidence that *there* we should find her friends, and reach a place of safety, and her ready movements and apparent knowledge of her ground, seemed so fully to bear out her statements, that, bound as I was by my engagement to escort her, I could not do otherwise than proceed. Such, however, was my repugnance to encounter these trials anew, that it needed the full force of this consideration, backed by the probable alterna-

tive of being made the subject of a Blackfoot broil, to overcome it.

Knowing the unwearied pertinacity with which the Indians follow up a trail once opened on, I was anxious, ere entering the mountain gorge through which our route next lay, to defeat the anticipated pursuit by making a false track in a different direction. Kosata agreeing in the suggestion, we spent the first hours of the morning in traversing the low ground along the mountain skirts, making as palpable a trail as possible, terminating at the entrance of a stony dale leading to the country of the Eutaw Indians, after which we returned to our starting point by a higher level on the hill side, where the rock and stones that covered it would afford no traces of our passage.

Both of us by this time being again ready for a halt, we made into a hollow on the mountain side, a little within the entrance of the pass, screened from observation on every side, but one which commanded a fine view

of the snowy summits of the Wind River range. A little rill came tumbling down the rocks hard by, at which we quenched our thirst, and bathed our sunburnt faces and fevered feet. Kosata, whom the elastic atmosphere of the region seemed to inspire with its own buoyancy, did not remain long quiet, but having produced what remained of the buffalo meat, proceeded to gather sticks and turf grass for a fire, which she shortly kindled, saying as she did so: "Light fire now, Felipe, and eat meat—sun high—Blackfoot no see—Wapiti go visit the Eutaws—find there better squaw than Kosata."

After despatching our rude fare, the restless maid arose, and going to the mouth of the hollow, stood there awhile looking at the prospect in front of her, then returning to where I sat, and touching me on the shoulder, said, pointing to the distant peaks: "See, Felipe, there Kosata's home—there, her people—there Kosata great Squaw."

"Queen of the wild men of the mountains,

eh ! pretty Kosata ? great squaw of 'les dignes de pitié ?' and were you born to the dignity, or did you drop down from heaven among your wild and woeful subjects ?"

She looked grave at these words, as though they were *επεα σπρητα*—touching on matters of mysterious import, but replied with sober naiveté "So, Felipe."

A vein of serious thought seemed to have been struck, and she seated herself demurely on a hillock near after giving her brief response.

Whilst sitting there, gazing at her snowy home, it would not have been difficult to fancy her the mystery queen she had professed herself, her airy and spiritual mien so well according with the idea.

Unconsciously almost to myself, the interest the young Indian had awakened in me from the first, increased the more I became acquainted with her. Her exquisite simplicity, yet piquant grace of manner, the offspring I judged of native amiability—her stealing,

deerlike movements partly proceeding from natural agility, but partly also I fancied, from a life beset with hazard—"the shooting lights of her wild eyes," as they wandered in search of danger, or mirrored the passing thought—even the broken parlance by which she strove to convey the latter, had each and all their secret charm and fascination for me, which grew more potent with the exercise.

Yet with them were mingled so much virgin purity, such an all-potential air of innocence, that scarce in the corruptest heart might a thought have been harboured detrimental to them.

What a pity a creature so endowed should be dedicated to a life of barbarism!

"Kosata," I said, as I went up to her on her grassy throne, and threw myself on the turf at her feet, "when you return to the sway of your snowy realms yonder, you must take me, I think, for your guardsman and prime minister. (She shook her head at this, of which she probably understood nothing.) But

I want to know, fair princess, where it was you first learned to converse in Yengee."

"No say, Felipe, 'cept there;" pointing to the sky, "it come when me speak with Yengee trader."

We then sat silently looking at each other for a length of time, my gaze attracted to her countenance, not so much by its actual and extraordinary beauty, as a singular faculty possessed by it of awakening curiosity and interest, which I was as little able to satisfy as account for.

At length a serious look came over it, she suddenly started up, and clasping her hands together, exclaimed:—

"Oh, Felipe, me think, canoe—no push him off!"

"By Jove! and that's the truth; we left it on the bank, and the Blackfeet will have struck our trail to a certainty."

This reflection filled our minds with such a sense of haunting peril, that we determined to limit our time of rest to what was actually in-

dispensable, and then push forwards as far as possible till nightfall. What little we said was now spoken in an undertone.

After the lapse of about an hour we therefore again got in motion, shaping our course as before, at a high level along the mountain slopes, in order to avoid lurking enemies, and leave no trail.

Several head of elk were seen as we passed along, but albeit our provisions had got low, I forbore to fire at them from the prudential considerations that were now uppermost.

Having made our way through this valley, we entered another, wilder, as it was more elevated than the last, and reaching a convenient locality as the moon began to rise, resolved upon halting there for the night.

We had now thrown such a space between us and our apprehended pursuers, that we thought we might venture on taking up our quarters in the lower ground, by the side of a good sized stream, which would supply a want we had much suffered from in our march

along the arid heights. Choosing out, therefore, a little green glade projecting into it, fringed on the water side with willows, and protected behind from surprise by a natural curtain of rock, we here threw down our burdens, and prepared to establish ourselves as comfortably as circumstances permitted. Our provisions being all but finished, I left Kosata to kindle the fire—a task she seemed to take a pleasure in—and getting out some fish-hooks I had managed to retain through fair and foul, repaired to the river side to try what might be done with them to mend our fare.

In front was a tranquil pool, with a fierce rapid above and below it, both one and the other of which I lashed for two mortal hours, with my line, in various directions, without any greater result than the capture of a small bass, which, with half her little handful of buffalo scraps, extracted by Kosata from the wallet, made up our faint and feeble apology for a supper.

When we had ended this, whilst the moon-

light enabled me, I proceeded to form a sort of sleeping booth for my fair comrade, by sticking willow boughs in the ground and joining the leafy tops together overhead, which with others laid on the ground by way of mattress, a good blanket to lie on, and the rippling water for a lullaby, made up accommodation she had often met with, and beyond which she knew no craving. Such are the simple wants of Indian life; such, the little required by unpampered nature to maintain it in the perfection of its form and functions.

Sensible how necessary it was to recruit her strength in order to achieve the crowning toils of the morrow, I soon commended Kosata to her slumbers, and retired to the little pass that commanded her verdant bedchamber, and by which alone danger either from man or beast could approach it.

Here, wrapped in my blanket, with my back resting against a tree, and my rifle on my knee, I was soon lulled to sleep by the monotonous murmurs of the river.

It was in the very depth of the night, when the moon had passed over the mountain tops, and everything around lay in undistinguishable gloom, that I felt my shoulder touched, and found the young Shoshonee standing beside me. "Felipe, good brother," she said, in a half whisper, "me no like you leave me, me 'fraid Blackfoot near, me no sleep, me hear no good."

"Be of good cheer, Indiana, tell me what it is you hear."

"Listen, Felipe, you hear it too, now ; there over water, bad sound."

I listened as she desired, for I knew how wonderfully keen are Indian senses, and fancied at one time I perceived a low indefinable noise like that of some wild animal, from what seemed a blacker blotch in the shade of the other bank, where I had previously remarked there was a thicket of willows. It was nothing, however, that seemed to augur danger, or, indeed, have any reference to ourselves, and I accordingly made light of her

fears, recommending her to return to her couch, in the assurance no danger could come nigh her without receiving timely warning. She had, however, been so overcome by her alarm (and indeed we found afterwards there was but too much ground for it) that I could not induce her to retire without my consenting to take up a position nearer to her.

Attending her, therefore, back, I spread my blanket by the harbour side, whilst the maiden re-entered it, and apparently enjoyed her needed rest for the remainder of the night.

At length the morning dawned of the day that was expected to conclude our flight, and see the fair fugitive restored to her home and people.

Awaking as the grey light over the mountain tops was changing into saffron, I stole noiselessly to her lair, and found her still steeped in the "honey heavy dew of slumber," her head resting on her arm, and her parted lips respiring the balmy breeze (not more balmy than the breath that returned it) of the

morning. Plucking a wildflower from the turf I drew it lightly across her lips, when she awoke with a slight start.

Arising with a smile, she shook her tresses in the air, and said :—

“O Felipe, me so glad—soon get home now—soon get there; (pointing to a range of heights about half a day’s journey off), no more Blackfoot now—Kosata, great squaw there—Felipe, her brother—be great chief there too—never leave Kosata—never.”

As she uttered, with emphasis, the last words, she rendered the appeal irresistible by seizing my hand in hers and pressing it to her bosom.

“I will not leave you, Kosata, be assured, till I have seen you safe among your people, but then I must think of finding my own, and fulfilling the vow which has brought me hither. Do you not think, my Indiana,” I continued, wishing to divert her thoughts from what seemed to sadden her, “we should both feel all the better for a mouthful of meat

to begin the day with? I suspect we shall want it before it's over."

"No bad, Felipe," she answered, with a racy smile; "but where get meat? See," she suddenly added, pointing with her finger, "there come meat—now you shoot meat to make us strong—good!"

Looking in the direction she indicated, I descried a herd of deer just drawing into view at the other side of the water, which, the better to understand what follows, needs a somewhat more particular description.

Though its average breadth did not exceed some twenty yards, it widened to double that extent in the part opposite our camp, being dammed up by a ledge of rocks that crossed it to within a couple of fathoms of our own side, where it abruptly ended, leaving an opening, through which the whole body of the stream poured with the impetuosity of a mill-race.

Some hundred paces further down occurred another partial bar, formed of disconnected

boulders, thro' the interstices of which the water found its way, yet set so close together as to be capable, to an active person, of serving the purpose of a bridge to the other side.

The rush of water thro' these two obstructions filled the air with a hoarse roar, producing, at a little distance, a pleasing irritation to the senses, tho' the sight of dead fish, floating belly upwards in the eddies, shewed the dangerous force of the currents that generated it.

• It was at the further end of this lower ledge that Kosata's quick eye discovered the forward files of a herd of deer pasturing at leisure, on the opposite bank. They were, however, just out of rifle range and seemed in no hurry to come within it. If we could only succeed in driving them up the bank to some point more directly fronting me, I had little doubt I should be able to drop one for the benefit of our craving stomachs.

Kosata soon perceived where the difficulty lay, and well skilled, for her sex, in the wild arts of the chase, darted off in spite of my whispered warning to the lower bar with the intention of beating up the game to the required point.

Gliding thro' the bushes like one of the fleet creatures she manœuvred, she soon reached the nearer end of the barrier, and played her part so cleverly that the deer, without being actually scared, edged slowly up in the desired direction, and at the extremity of the higher bar gave me a good shot with my Spanish rifle, which threw a fat buck into the death kicks. I then loaded again with all speed, and well it was I observed this essential canon of the chase, for I had barely driven down the ball when a shrill prolonged shriek of terror struck my ear. A single glance explained its meaning. Before me I beheld Kosata flying, panic struck, towards me over the rocks of the higher barrier, her hair

streaming meteor-like behind her, her looks aghast with terror, and a huge grizzly bear in close pursuit.

What a frightful situation! In front an impassable torrent—a merciless, wild beast in her rear!

For a moment I remained fixed where I stood in sympathetic horror, and in that moment the poor fugitive had nearly reached the verge of the furious rapid that would have cut off further flight.

Obeying impulse rather than reflection I then fired.

At the same instant I beheld Kosata throw herself into the water below the barrier, where there was a back-current produced by it, whilst the fierce brute, irritated by the wound it had received, and seeing its aggressor opposite, plunged with blind fury into the racing flood for the purpose of attacking me. Carried away in an instant by the strength of the current, I had shortly the satisfaction of seeing it dashed with considerable force

against the rocks of the lower bar. Not wishing, however, to leave in doubt an issue so essential to our safety, I followed it up, after having again loaded, along the side, and whilst endeavouring to raise its unwieldy bulk upon the rocks, sent it a shot in the ear which ended all further demonstrations with its life.

I then turned with much anxiety to ascertain the fate of the young Indian. Crossing the lower bar so as to reach the point—which could only be done by going round—where I had last beheld her, I happily had my apprehensions dispelled on nearing the place, by seeing her issue from a cleft in the rocks, and hasten, all dripping, to meet me.

She had suffered such a fright that I scarcely had the heart to chide her, more especially as it was presently apparent that her escape had not been scot free, but clogged with the penalty of a very perceptible limp.

It appeared from her account that after crossing the lower barrier, actuated by curi-

osity, she had followed the deer up the other side in order to see the effect of my shot; that on reaching the spot where I had dropped my game, she found it to her great terror already in the possession of the brute that had pursued her—it was doubtless this animal that had disturbed us during the night—and whose notice she had attracted by the shriek she had raised on the occasion. In the precipitation of her flight, her foot had been caught in a cranny of the rocks, and though unnoticed at the time, it proved now to be severely sprained; indeed, ere we had gone half way back to the camp she found herself unable to use it, and I was obliged to carry her the remainder of the distance in my arms.

Lighting a fire near the harbour that she might dry her dripping clothes, I then repaired again to the other side for our much needed venison.

This untoward occurrence had taken up the best part of the morning, and it had worn

well on towards noon ere I had prepared my deer's-meat dinner.

On carrying her a portion of this I found the disabled girl swathed in blankets, leaning against a tree, and groaning with pain, "Oh, Felipe, foot sick—no make track now—no get to Arkla—Blackfoot come now and take us—make scalp dance for Felipe and Kosata."

"Fear not that, Indiana, we'll soon have the foot all right again, if there be no bones broke; let me, I pray you, have a look at it, and try if I can help the process, whilst you eat this dainty bit of venison you've so well earned."

Yielding to my solicitation, she took the bark platter from my hand, whilst bending down over the ailing limb, I proceeded to examine the nature of its injury.

Who may conceive my feelings, the tumult of astonishment and joy, mocking all power of utterance that filled my breast, when on a foot as white as my own, and riveting my eye at the first glance, I beheld, a little below

the instep, "a red spot, the color of a cherry and shape of a pear," the birth-branded and indelible token of her whom I had come so far, undergone such anxiety and toil, and was now well nigh despairing to find—the "Young Fawn."

Yes, there it was, the clear and infallible sign, before my eyes, and there lay she groaning in the midst of the wilderness, just escaped from a ferocious wild beast, and in momentary dread of being scalped by savages; there, ignorant alike of her country, rank, and kin, doubting whether she was the daughter of an out-cast tribe of Indians, or fallen with the snow from heaven, sat the tenderly nurtured Laura, of my first pilgrimage, the daughter of my friend, Lord Ard-capell, the heiress of far-distant Leighton.

CHAPTER IX.

As these reflections rushed through and convulsed my mind, I continued gazing in speechless absorption at the object that had excited them ; and whilst the unwitting girl rested the delicate foot and swollen ankle in my hands, and plaintively enquired if I could relieve her pain, I could only reply by tears, which in the sudden surprisal of my feelings, I was momentarily unable to repress.

Puzzled to account for this manifestation, "No weep, Felipe," she said, thinking I might be overcome by my sympathy, "foot no bery bad, soon come well," a speech to which the moans that broke it, and tumified appear-

ance of the part, gave something like the lie direct. Then observing me still gazing at it absorbed in wonder, another idea seized her mind: "Oh, Felipe!" she exclaimed, smiling through her tears, "me see now, foot white, face dark; foot Yengee—face, Blackfoot! lo! my brother, when Kosata come there (pointing to the snowy mountains), long, long, ago, face, foot, hand, all white, white as yonder snow. Shoshonee call her daughter of snow, say she come down from heaven (looking up at the sky),. make her great Squaw, then Blackfoot take her. Blackfoot no love white. Wapiti no love white; when he seek Kosata for Squaw, make her red like Blackfoot, make Kosata bery, bery fine Squaw for Wapiti," and the arch maiden laughed in spite of her pain at Wapiti's wasted care.

Receiving no answer to her words, and seeing my looks immovably fixed as before, her thoughts suddenly took a new direction natural enough considering her sex and circumstances; with a movement of maidenly

modesty she withdrew her foot from my hands, wrapped herself more straitly in her envelope, and saying her limb would now do very well, hinted I might take my gun and endeavour to procure us some more venison.

Aroused at length from my trance, and feeling how essential it was to our safety that my patient should be restored with all possible celerity, I collected some soothing herbs, of which, wrapping them in a piece of my sleeve, I made a poultice, and repossessing myself (not without a show of reluctance on her part) of the withdrawn member, carefully applied the fomentation to it, after which, recommending her to observe perfect repose, I retired to where I had left my dinner cooking, and endeavoured, while discussing the long-delayed meal, to realize in my mind the wonderful discovery I had fallen on.

Profoundly impressed with the newly-acquired importance of my charge, I felt fairly at my wits' end what course to take so as best to ensure its preservation ; whether to

attend my *protégée* to her imagined countrymen, or make our way at once out of the mountains by a southern route.

The delay (otherwise so undesirable), consequent on her lameness, would, I thought, give me time to consider each plan deliberately, and meanwhile it became urgently needful to place ourselves out of jeopardy till the time should arrive for its adoption.

Though under the pressure of hunger and thirst, we had ventured one night's lodging in the thoroughfare, as it were of the glen, it would not have been prudent to hazard the same a second time, and I therefore climbed the mountain side for the purpose of choosing a more eligible retreat. After some little exploration I discovered one admirably suited for our purpose, but a short distance in advance of our present camp, and a considerable height above it, whither I lost no time on my return in transporting the lame maiden and our few moveables.

The new asylum I had fixed on was a re-

cess in the mountain side, full three hundred feet above the bottom, partially overbrowed by rock so as perfectly to shelter us from the sudden storms incidental to the region, and fronted by a little grassy plateau, from which bubbled forth a pellucid spring of water, so needful an accessory to a homestead, however rude.

For my companion, I made a couch in the inner part of fir branchlets, overlaid with deerskin, and it was as she lay stretched upon this, after our evening meal, resting her hurt limb, that I set myself to sound her recollections of her past life, so as if possible, by touching some long-dormant train of ideas or feelings, to secure a readier faith in the wondrous tale I had to unfold to her.

Forbearing at the outset to acquaint her with the full truth, for fear of overtaking her power of credence, I endeavoured to raise up in her imagination images that must once strongly have impressed it, such as the persons of her parents, the fire at the Far Pines,

her long journey over the Prairies, &c., but was greatly chagrined to find her memory as yet at fault, and her mind mystified by Indian fable, and stunned by the vicissitudes of her latter wilding life, unable to realize the pictures of its earlier and remoter stage.

Perceiving her at length wearied with my catechising, I thought it prudent to desist, after obtaining from her a promise she would meditate during the night on what I had said, and prayed that the truth might be revealed to her.

As the night fell, and, seated at the entrance of the grot, I pondered on the discovery I had made; the position of the interesting foundling, and the multiplied perils that environed her, I could not help asking myself half aloud, "What would they say at Leighton, could they see their young heiress now? What would its noble lord think? What, Cyrus Farleton feel? and what, my esteemed friend and father-in-law, 'be of opinion?'"

I recalled the night twelve months before, when I walked about the park absorbed in vague conjectures as to her fate, and wondered what I myself should have thought had anyone foretold me the events that had since fallen out; that thousands of miles away from that English ground, I should by the same time next year find myself successful in a quest that had so long lain like an incubus on my mind—successful too, under such strange, unexampled circumstances.

Lastly, what would the world think of the tale, should it ever be related by the pen of some "ready writer?" And how comes it (I conclude), that in this melo-drame of real life, I, who am scarce concerned in it save by the bonds of a general sympathy, should find myself the chief actor, and sole attesting witness?

The moon was shedding its white light on the rocky heights around, and everything lay sealed in unbroken silence, when, constrained

by a mastering religious impulse, I knelt down upon the dewy sward, and endeavoured to compose my thoughts by prayer.

Whilst thus commending myself and ward to Divine protection, I felt an arm resting on my neck and found Kosata standing by me. "Felipe," said she, in a low and tender voice, as befitted the occasion, "you pray the Great Spirit for Kosata ; Kosata come pray for you ; pray He may send you, good, dear Felipe, and keep us both together, evermore."

"I was offering up prayers, Kosata (I somehow was unable to resign this name, whose romantic wildness pleased me), that we may both get back safely to England."

"Tell me where is England, Felipe?"

"It is the country you came from, at a time, it seems, you cannot remember ; there you have a parent living still, and—"

"Say on, Felipe, me listen."

"You heard what I said in the Blackfeet Council Lodge?"

"Me heard," she answered with a sort of sigh.

"Well, you are the very daughter I then spoke of and took a solemn vow to bring back to him; return now to your couch, that your foot may have the rest it needs, and think yet again on what I have told you; to-morrow we will talk of these matters more at large."

The next day found us occupying our snug retreat in the full enjoyment of that repose, which though scarcely quite safe under the circumstances, was so agreeable after our late over-tasking toil.

I was gratified to find my patient's lameness much abated, and after sponging her foot in the cold fountain, we sat ourselves down by its side and made a hearty breakfast off our venison.

Whilst we were engaged in discussing it, the sun rose cloudlessly in the heavens, diffusing a burning radiance that seemed to penetrate the very stones. Refracted on the mountain side where we were sitting, it soon

became too hot for our endurance, and retreating once again into the grot, we spent the remainder of the day in conversing on the interesting subject we had broached the night before. My companion shewed more irregularity of mood than I had yet observed in her, being alternately wrapt in silent reveries, and questioning me with eager interest on some one or other of the facts I slowly and cautiously disclosed to her.

Thought and memory were evidently doing their work, and I was pleased in the various questions that she put to me, to mark their progress and anticipate their growth into full and perfect faith.

At length the sun began to sink, and our side of the valley being now in shade, I carried my lame comrade on to the green, where, while pursuing our conversation, we might regale ourselves with the cooler air and changeful pageantry of evening.

Our position was on a shoulder of the

mountain, formed by the main valley and a lateral glen, scarcely wider than a ravine, that entered it at right angles.

Directly fronting us on the other side of the vale rose an immense range of mural cliff (a continuation, I found afterwards, of that which had stopped me a few days before my capture), running along it as far as the eye could reach, consisting of yellow free-stone, resembling the well-known Bath stone of England, perfectly precipitous, and now warmly lighted up by the farewell glow of the sunset. Along the summit ran a ragged line of firs, stretching athwart the sky their eldritch arms, twisted by winds into every shape of distortion, and forming a fitting climax to the barbaric scene they crowned.

As the day had dawned, so was it now departing, in the perfect stillness of an unpeopled waste. The heavens were stretching over the unconscious rocks their varied maze of coloring, stamping on the giant features of the

landscape, now brought out by the evening shadows in their full vastness, an expression at once beautiful and solemn.

Not a sound broke in on its breathing stillness save that of our own low tones, and we surrendered ourselves to the loveliness of the hour and effusion of our feelings, with an *abandon* that caught rather relish than alloy from a still lingering sense of insecurity.

Kosata, her hair flowing about her shoulders, and her delicate countenance beaming with the light that so well beseemed it of her innocent and gracious spirit, was seated by my side, now absorbed in thought, now smiling at the forlorn condition and unbeauteous encasements of her foot, and anon exclaiming with delight (for she shared my appreciation of the beautiful) at the glorious view in front of her.

Thrown thus together in the midst of the wilderness—glance meeting glance, hand locked in hand—with none but the all-seeing God to read our souls or note our acts, not a

thought that might offend His goodness for a moment entered the minds of either of us. An unfeigned interest in each other's welfare, enhanced by our hazardous situation, a tender trustfulness on her side, the offspring of a good nature and varied in its manifestations by the playful eddies of her sex and age, a profound solicitude on mine, mingled with a peculiar sympathy engendered by old associations, were the sentiments that ruled our hearts and kept them from betraying us to error.

At length my companion became silent, and her head sank upon my shoulder. What was the precise tenor of her thoughts I could not tell, but my own were involuntarily wending back to the time, thirteen years before, when I held her a child on my knee in her father's cottage.

Carried away in their current I unconsciously pressed my lips, as I might then have done, on the lovely head that was reclining on me.

"Pardon me, dear Kosata," I said, as she looked up with an innocent smile, "I was fancying you the little fairy I used to salute so in the days of yore."

She mused on what I said with a half bashful air, gave me a sort of side smile, and replied with a certain emphasis of manner, "me grown big fairy now, Felipe."

After meditating again some little time, she addressed me as follows: "Good brother, you say me come from the sunrise, over the great Salt Lake, from England; Shoshonee say me come with snow from heaven; Kosata no tell only this; she little piccaninny on big mountain here-by, no white man, no red man near; she see smoke, Indian wigwam there; snowstorm come and make her very cold, Shoshonee then come and take her to him wigwam, say she come down with snow, she look so white, love her very much, make her great squaw; Shoshonee very good, Kosata love him; Felipe very good, Kosata love him; now tell me, good brother, how me

little fairy by sunrise when me piccaninny here in Arkla, with Shoshonees."

In answer to her speech I now unreservedly made known to her the entire history of her earlier life, the dark and treacherous plot of which she had been the victim, how necessary her abduction had been to its accomplishment, and that her persecutors had exposed her in the position which seemed to have left the earliest impression on her mind, in the full persuasion that, as though prisoned in the grave itself, she would never return to trouble them.

To all this she listened in unbounded wonder, and at length a tear stole down her cheek as she haply thought the very Blackfeet she was fleeing from would have used her less unmercifully.

Wiping away the silent token, she rejoined "But how you know me that young Fawn you speak of, good brother? how you know that 'lordee' my father, that 'ladee' my mother?"

“By a great ‘medicine’ I carry about me, and by which I could tell you to be the fawn I seek though you were hid in a herd of thousands. I will show it to you.”

I then presented her her mother’s portrait, to which, her Indian tint excepted, she bore a remarkable resemblance, and at which she long gazed with silent interest.

“There you behold your mother, Kosata, and looking on your face I see her copy. It was over that mother’s grave I vowed to befriend you in her stead. I have crossed the big waters and traversed the boundless prairies that I might do so, and now I have found you,” said I, pressing my lips on the lovely head which was again resting on my shoulder, “O maiden of many cares, most richly do I feel myself repaid !”

Kosata mused awhile on what I had said, then looked up at me, and then away ; but my words had found their way to her heart, and in her fleeting glance I gathered that

which rewarded me for the long labours of a twelvemonth.

"Moreover," I continued "the young fawn I speak of had a red mark on its left foot. Have you not that mark, Kosata?"

To this she replied by smiling, and slightly moving the bandaged member.

"And above all," I proceeded, "it had another planted by nature here," taking her forefinger and placing it a little below the articulation of the neck and shoulder, where according to her nurse's statement there would be a mole now covered by her dress; "by that mark let the truth be now determined. If you find it where I say, you are the Yengee maid I seek for; if you find it not, you may remain if you still so please, the heaven-sent snow queen of the Shoshonees."

Induced by my observations the maid unloosed the robe around her neck, when the tell-tale token was immediately manifest, and I was turning my eyes from the attractive

sight in a last silent appeal to her blushing countenance, when I beheld, to my astonishment, its every feature frozen into an expression of intense horror.

Following the direction of her looks with my own, I at once discovered what fearfully accounted for the change.

The sun had already left the other side of the valley, leaving its wall-like cliff in utter shade, save where it faced the ravine before spoken of as entering it from the westward at right angles.

Here, by the light still streaming down the latter, it was yet illumined for a certain space, and flitting athwart this bright part like the lusive spectra of the magic-lantern, were seen—magnified to colossal size—the moving shadows of a file of Indians, advancing up the dell with the stealthy pace and eager attitude of bloodhounds following on a high scent; their number (fifteen), mien, and guise, even to the nodding war plume of their crests, were all there distinctly figured, and as we

watched the fearful pageant (each party as yet unseen by the other), carried the terrible conviction to our souls that our enemies had tracked us up at length, and were now ready to run in upon their prey.

Well might Kosata look aghast.





CHAPTER X.

IN a few minutes more they would reach the point where our trail (which we had taken too little care to hide) ascended the mountain side, and tho' among the stones and rocks likely for the moment to be thrown out, there was little doubt of our pursuers then making a cast which would inevitably sweep our position, and with my companion in her present disabled state, it seemed next to impossible we should escape it.

Fortunately she had just received the fresh applications to her foot, and we had both of us been recruited by a long rest, so there being but one course open to us—seizing my

rifle in my hand whilst I supported her drooping form with the other—we commenced a hurried flight up the mountain.

For some little distance a thick setting of dwarf birch trees afforded us a temporary screen, but above this lay a bare and prominent tract of hill which I foresaw would be the critical part, there being scarce a possibility of passing it without being descried from below.

As I feared, so it fell out. We had taken but a few steps over its treacherous area when the warwhoop sounded from the glen, falling upon our ears with all the significance of a death knell.

Such, indeed, I thought it had proved to Kosata, for she sank to the earth at the sound, and on continuing our flight I found it necessary to carry her forward in my arms.

Here was an ominous addition to the odds against us, which, fleetfooted and numerous as were our enemies, left us apparently but little chance even at the outset.

We possessed, however, the advantage of a good start to begin with, being a full half mile in advance up a steep mountain side ere we were discovered, and another belt of scrub lying a short distance further ahead, inspired us with the hope of again, perhaps, being able to conceal ourselves.

With the yells ringing in our ears, this we at last reached, and here I replaced Kosata on her feet, urging her to use her utmost efforts to keep up with me. The poor girl accordingly essayed to proceed unaided, but her frequent falls and ill-suppressed moans shewing how little she was able to do so, I once more found myself obliged to bear her, and being now hidden by the copsewood we turned off again at a sharp angle from our former course, and made through the brush towards the summit of the mountain, where it had appeared of least elevation.

After a desperate struggle with its difficulties this we at length gained, though over-

- come with excessive exertion, I fainted and fell on reaching it.

Revived after some minutes by the cooler breeze, wafted from adjacent snow tracts, I eagerly turned to reconnoitre the movements of our tireless foes.

No longer having us in sight we could perceive them engaged in slowly picking out our trail through the lower copse, which affording us a momentary respite, in order to make the most of it, I turned to examine the line of our further flight, when an unexpected scene presented itself.

We had attained the border of one of those little rock-bound realms I had before been so fascinated by in my late wanderings among these mountains. A verdant area of some hundred acres resembling a large lawn lay before and below us, in a sort of flexure, the bottom occupied by a little tarn, and its higher sides by suites of rocky terraces, spotted here and there by caves, and diversified by dwarf shrubbery.

At the further side, and opposite to us, a shoulder of rock stood out in a manner that marked it to our eager apprehension as a position where many might be kept at bay by few, and inspired the sudden hope that as continued flight was impossible, the struggle for our lives might be there maintained for some time further. Though all would depend on our reaching it before our enemies, so utterly were we prostrated by toil that we found it unavoidable to rest some minutes longer, myself supporting, with sensations scarcely less poignant than her own, my vainly recovered prize, and she, poor wretch, entreating me rather to kill her with my own hand than suffer her to fall again into the power of the hated Blackfeet.

“Oh, Felipe,” she cried, pointing woefully to her scratched and bleeding limb, from which the dressings had been torn off in her flight, “all sick foot (thus she worded it) do this—here me die, my brother—me run no

more—but you no lame ; you run, make track, and save yourself.”

The yells of the Blackfeet, who had now made their way through the wood, soon put an end to this tender by-play, and noting for an instant their position, I grasped my rifle with a vengeful clutch, and turned once more to bear the hapless maid over the last stage of our retreat.

A change had, however, I observed, come over her countenance even in that short space ; her eyes, averted from our foes, were now fixed sparkling on a clump of trees not far from the spot we were making for, and whether she recognized its features, or discovered smoke arising from it, to this she eagerly pointed, exclaiming :—

“ Felipe, see ! friends there, run, run, run, run.”

Inspired by the thought she uttered, overcoming for the moment all sense of pain, she ran before me down the steep descent, and

across the little lawn towards the rock on which all our hopes now rested. Already had we reached its base when she again stumbled and fell; catching her hurriedly up, I was eagerly searching about for some access along its side, when our pursuers appeared again on the mountain crest behind, and the two parties being now in sight, raising another of their hideous yells, poured down into the valley after us.

Kosata's keen vision was not long in discovering a practicable track, and with a readiness I at the time marvelled at, directed my failing steps through its cramped and rugged windings.

The rock was gained.

Laying my helpless burden in a hollow which would secure her from the enemy's missiles, I flew back to defend the passage we had come up by—the only one as it appeared to our position.

Esconsing myself behind a projection of rock, I beheld them approach at slackened

speed, and at a safe distance hold a brief council for the purpose of settling the best mode of circumventing us.

This being shortly ended, they scattered themselves with practised readiness, and sheltering their persons behind the irregularities of the ground, proceeded with the snakelike movements that characterise Indian warfare, to attempt the capture of our strong-hold.

Keeping close in my cover, still as death, I strained my eyes almost to bursting on the all important pass, the lower part of which was already beginning to be darkened by the evening shade, and at length became aware of a living form prostrate on the ground, advancing up it with a scarcely more perceptible motion than the creeping shadows it was mingled with. That it did move, however, I was confident, and as the path wound directly under the flank of the cliff, the idea suddenly occurred to me I might be able to avert this danger without expending my ammunition—now so unspeakably precious—or exposing

myself to the awful casualty of an empty barrel.

Laying down my piece, and grasping a large stone with both hands, I stole along the verge of the cliff, to a point immediately over the lurking figure, and cast it with my whole force down upon it. The muffled sound that followed assured me the blow had told. Though not slain upon the spot, he had been beyond doubt disabled, and his vacant lair soon proved that one at least of the blood-thirsty crew was off our hands.

A deep silence followed this lucky stroke, almost more trying to the spirit than the clamour of an actual onslaught, and it was broken not by this or any other sound of mortal warfare, but the shrilling strain of a horn, issuing from some unseen source, but apparently close at hand. The tone was high-pitched and piercing, and as it pealed through the little vale, awaking the long-dormant echoes of its terraces, there seemed something preternatural in the sound.

Ere it had fully died away the yells of the savages, rang in the air around us, and I silently prepared myself for the struggle for life and death that was to follow.

I had not long to wait. A string of warriors, sprung, as it seemed, out of the earth itself, dashed like lightning into the pathway, mounting the ascent with wonderful activity, and confidently counting upon mastering the position by a sudden rush. The leader—a herculean savage, armed with a fusee—discharged his weapon as he advanced, and exposing his body, as he did so, to my aim, received the contents of my rifle, which tumbled him on the two warriors who followed.

During the momentary confusion that ensued, there not being time to load, I hurled down fragments of rock upon the latter—who were stationed directly underneath me, and again with good effect, disabling another assailant, and compelling the remainder (for Indians are apt to shrink beneath a first and telling check), to an instant tho' but temporary retreat.

This afforded me an opportunity for reloading my piece, and I opened the trap in the stock in order to obtain a fresh charge. By some accident, however, it had got open, and I now found its precious contents wanting.

Deep was my dismay—deep my execrations, as I flung the useless implement upon the rock, and revolved the desperate extremity the mishap had reduced me to.

Again I perceived signs that menaced a repetition of the assault, and it was during the momentary lull that preceded what I could not but feel sure would be a last and successful charge, that the shrill notes of the horn again reverberated in the air near me.

Scarce were its echoes silent, when, as tho' evoked from the mountain side by the spell of some powerful exorcist, figures of dwarfish size and wildest aspect, armed with bows and arrows, appeared on my right hand and my left, to the number of a dozen or more, who stationing themselves at the top of the contested pass, prepared, with looks of resolution,

to repel the assault I had feared so much from.

Could they be real? was my first thought, or were they not the creation of a disturbed and despairing fancy?

My doubts were speedily dispelled by seeing a prowling Blackfoot, who by some unknown means had scaled the rock behind, and come unawares upon us, transfixed on the spot by their ready arrows.

Tho' thus joyfully visible to myself, the new and strange auxiliaries were yet out of view of the hostile band below, and when, with a loud exulting yell, the expected rush took place, they little dreamed of the crushing reception that awaited it.

Posted at the head of the pass, and along the verge of the cliff that flanked it, the mountaineers lay still till the six warriors, who formed the storming party, had half accomplished the ascent when, suddenly greeting them with a shower of arrows, they stretched three of the number on the ground,

and put the remaining three (two of them bearing away in their bodies the avenging missiles), to an instant and headlong flight.

Our enemies being thus a second time repulsed, and as I hoped, for good, (for five of the fifteen lay dead, and three we knew to be badly wounded), I anxiously repaired to the place where I had left Kosata, and happily found her unharmed, her little bugle lying at her feet, and a number of wild women around her, who were testifying their joy by every species of loving antic and gleeful homage.

“O Felipe!” she cried out as she beheld me, “saved! saved! my people kill Black-foot and save us—save us both! O Felipe!” clasping her hands, and with a deep sigh of relief, “See, Ark-la, Felipe—this Kosata’s home—this your home now—no fear Black-foot now—my people drive them and make us safe—you live with me now in Ark-la,” and stretching out her arms she threw herself passionately into mine.

Breaking from me at length she applied her little bugle to her lips, and produced the magic notes I had before heard, which had so happily changed the fortunes of the day in our own favor.

“Kosata call her braves now,” she said with a smile, “see your brothers now, Felipe.”

Obedient to the wonted summons the wild cragsmen came flocking in from the chase of their routed foes, and exchanged delighted greetings with their lost and new found Lady.

Leaving these singular beings to render her their kindly offices I returned to the scene of conflict, over which the moon was now shedding its mild and peaceful lustre. The dead were found already despoiled of their scalps, the trophies of Indian warfare—objects of their vindictive raid—which they had little deemed they were so soon themselves to forfeit. In the warrior who carried the firelock I recognized one of my captors on the Wind river, and on his person found a small store of

powder and ball, which in my present circumstances were more valuable to me than so much gold, though the latter, being too large for my rifle, cost me some trouble in reducing to a proper size.

On returning to the platform rock a cheerful fire was seen sending up its flame and sparks into the frosty air (on these airy heights it is thus till nearly midsummer), and round it gathered in earnest converse the members of the little mountain tribe, listening with eager interest to the narrative of their fair twice-rescued chieftain.

The dubious glances I was at first greeted with were gradually converted as she spoke, into those of cordiality and welcome, and when one of their number, who had eyed me with more attention from the first, bounded forward and announced himself to be the individual I had saved in the "stony glen" by shooting his pursuer, it seemed as if they could set no bounds to the exhibition of their gratitude and regard.

Whilst engaged in this genial intercourse two of their clansmen joined the circle, whose belts, in the reeking scalps that decked them, told at once the nature and success of the business they had been engaged in, and how completely the tables had been turned upon the luckless crew who had so perseveringly wrought for our destruction. They must thus have lost, out of their original number of fifteen, no less than eight warriors, who would never again sit at the council fire, whilst of those who had escaped more than one would probably be rendered useless for anything more active. We had now evidently nothing more to fear from them.

Our simple hearted allies spent the night in feasting and dancing, or giving fuller outlet to their feelings by occasional yells of triumph. Taken in connexion with the circumstances that gave it birth, and the scenery amid which it lay, it was a strange and striking spectacle—worthy of the wild pencil of Salvator.

For myself, exhausted by the excessive toil

—bodily and mental—I had undergone, after seeing my tender *protégée* properly cared for, I was soon wrapped in a sleep that set din, danger, and the picturesque alike at defiance.

CHAPTER XI.

ON awaking the next morning the sun was already risen on our mountain refuge, called by its wild inhabitants "Ark-la," lighting up its bright green sward, its azure loch and romantic cliffs into a perfect blaze of fairy-land.

The miniature character of the landscape, joined with the chrystalline purity of the atmosphere, incidental to its great altitude, seemed to reduce the whole within the compass of my handgrasp, and, save that on every side—in the flowing and trill of streams—the waving of grass or foliage, the hum of insects,

the voice of men, was manifested Nature's agency, it might less have been deemed her work than some alluring phantasm destined to dissolve in air after leaving its startling impress on the senses.

- In this fair and unexplored retreat we abode for upwards of a week in order to give time for the cure of Kosata's injured ankle, again thrown back by her late exertions.

The time was agreeably spent in studying the character and habits of its strange residents, taking part in their hazardous mountain hunts, and exploring the wonderful region they inhabited.

The community consisted of but eight families, numbering some dozen effective males, with as many more women and children, who found a precarious subsistence on roots and the little game they were able to procure with their rude and imperfect implements.

Their stature (unlike that of mountaineers in general) was small and stunted, their appearance the wildest of the wild, and their

dress composed of skins such as lent little help to the niggard handiwork of nature.

Their arms consisted chiefly of bows made (many of them with much neatness) of pine-wood strengthened and braced with sinews, and arrows, of the stems of the wild rose carefully straightened, and tipped with serpentine. With these simple weapons they will bring down the deer, the elk, and mountain sheep, but in severe seasons when these animals retire to the lower grounds, where it would be dangerous to follow them, they are frequently reduced to great extremities—such indeed as none but those born and broken to a life of privation could possibly endure.

If their haunts should be invaded by their warlike neighbours or those still rarer visitors, white hunters, they fly at once to their rocky fastnesses, seldom opposing force to force, and then only when pushed to extremity, moved (as on the late occasion) by some mastering impulse, or emboldened by clear superiority of odds. Yet while manifesting

this peculiar shyness and aversion to intercourse with other races they are kind and sociable among themselves, sharing willingly in each other's good and evil fortune and readily responding to friendly treatment from whatever quarter it may come. Not having the wit to enrich themselves by despoiling their neighbours, or the taste to make a trade of aggression, they are looked upon as a race of outcasts, and bear the name among the voyageurs whose calling brings them occasionally into contact, of "*les dignes de pitié.*"

It is not surprising that by these simple and superstitious beings the mysterious appearance of the fair white child when exposed during a snow-storm near these scarce accessible haunts should have been regarded as something more than natural, that they should have connected the one event with the other, or that, enhanced by the sweetness of her disposition, and superiority of her endowments, the circumstance should have given her the

sway it did over their crude and credulous imaginations. Accepted as a gift from Heaven they had tended her till her capture by the Blackfeet, eighteen months before, as the guardian "genie" of their tribe, her will their guide and law, her safety their chief study.

Foremost in devoted homage was the now aged squaw, Shagachla, who had been first to find her after her abandonment, and had reared her up with an affection that knew no difference, together with a child of her own—a boy of the same age named Kosato.

As their years increased an attachment naturally grew up between them, largely leavened on the part of the latter by the reverential feeling due to the supposed origin of his white sister.

This youth, though little gifted in an intellectual sense, had those honest and kindly instincts, which though rare amongst the Indians, are yet to be found at times in every race and color to honour our common nature.

Though low of stature he possessed great agility, was an adroit and untiring hunter, but like the rest of his timid tribe, feeling no vocation for the war path except when necessity impelled.

His years, however, were yet but few, and the chase more appropriately sorted with them.

Accompanied by this stripling, armed with his bow and arrows, I made several excursions in the mountains, and found frequent occasion for admiring his dexterity as well in finding as in striking game, though a "coup de grace" from my own rifle was often required to effect its final capture.

Conscious of the protection afforded by this weapon, which like "Friday," he regarded with especial awe, he ventured in my company far beyond the usual limits of his tribe, and became by degrees so much attached, that I began to conceive hopes of being able to induce him to attend us on our further

journey, when his talents for woodcraft might be turned to such valuable account.

Eventually the matter was broken to him through the medium of Kosata, but the inveterate shyness of his nature foiled our views till the time arrived for her departure, when torn in twain by conflicting impulses, he confessed at last which was the mightiest, by reluctantly consenting to attend the steps and fortunes of his foster sister.

This is, however, anticipating. Ere employing her influence with her satellite, it was in the first place necessary to make a convert of herself, and this, strange as it may seem, cost me far the most trouble of the two.

Now she had returned to her early home, flushed with the holiday feeling it inspired, and lifted up by the loving service, almost amounting to adoration, of her wild liegemen, she evinced a strong disposition to abide with them ; and it was not until after many urgent solicitations and debates that I finally pre-

vailed on her to quit her beloved Ark-la for England.

Whilst engaged in these discussions, we would seat ourselves on the rocky ridge that girt our vale, commanding outwards the wide-spread tract of mountains I have before described for an immense distance (probably not less than a hundred miles) over which our eyes would wander as we talked, whilst some exultant rill fresh from its tellurian cradle, dashed down the giddy steeps hard by, and kept up a running accompaniment to our discourse.

To the various arguments I used she would reply in some such manner as the following: "Felipe," she would say, "you tell me Eng-land fine country—you love Eng-land, it your country—Kosata live here, love Ark-la. You say me be happy in Eng-land, me think me happy here; you say me be great squaw in Eng-land, me great squaw now here; see, Felipe," pointing to the stream that ran by us, "see that water, how it play, how it sing,

how it shine—so,” she continued, throwing back a handful she had taken of it into its channel, “when sun rise it far away in prairie—big river then—no jump—no sing—no shine—big river—no more; Kosata think she that water, Felipe, when she go away from Ark-la.”

“But here,” I would return, “you have danger dogging you on every side—live constantly exposed to be tomahawked—devoured by grizzly bears—starved to death in winter—blown from the rocks by tempests—there are none of these dangers now to fear in England.”

“So, Felipe,” she would rejoin after a pause, and with a sigh, “and there my father dwell, you say, and now in my dreams I hear my mother’s voice, and it say to me evermore, Kosata, come to England; but how me leave Shagachla? How me leave Kosato? It break their hearts—break mine.”

She would then ponder for the rest of the day on these and the other arguments made.

use of; the ideas I endeavoured to impress would take more and more hold on her imagination; the desire of novelty (so powerful an impulse in female nature) would become awakened, and at length, to my great gratification, she ended by yielding to the course proposed, acknowledging it as that apparently marked out by destiny.

Accordingly, so soon as she had recovered from her lameness, after devoting a final day to a solemn leavetaking with the strange, yet kindly beings, who the unwitting instruments of providence, had reared her to fulfil its secret ends—a ceremony which to an unhack-nied heart, had many scenes of even painfully touching interest—we at length set forth, accompanied for the day by five of the faithful natives (besides Kosato) on our long and perilous return of more than two thousand miles—directing our course towards a pass considerably to the south of all our former journeyings, which we had reason to hope would take us clear of the dangerous and

detested tribe that had so harassed us, whilst offering a favorable starting point for our transit over the prairies.

The sunset of the first day saw us through the Wind river mountains (which in spite of my regard for my wild cousins I fervently hoped I should never see again) without misadventure or alarm, and dismissing on the morrow our trusty Arklans, we continued on our way under the guidance of Kosato, my *protégée's* feet being doubly moccassined as an additional security against her falling lame, and thus stealing along with the gait of conspirators and wariness of wounded deer, we achieved a second day's march of some five-and-twenty miles in safety.

The country had by this become milder in its aspect, and under a hill of moderate height, clothed to the summit with sombre pinewood, we took up our position, and prepared our camp for the night.

Having gathered some wood for our fire we were upon the point of kindling it, when the

Shoshonee held up his hand as a sign of caution, and Kosata almost at the same instant declared she perceived the smell of smoke. I had determined at the outset to sacrifice every minor consideration to the paramount one of safety, and as it had become too dark to continue our march we pushed on a little higher up the hill side, and passed the night without fire, supping on dried elk meat.

On the morrow, at earliest dawn I shouldered my rifle, and leaving Kosata under charge of her foster brother, took my way in the direction the suspicious odor had appeared to come. Creeping cautiously along, I soon reached the top of the eminence, and then got a view of a pleasant valley at the other side, from which I perceived with alarm a column of smoke rising above the thick-lying mists of morning.

Descending into the valley, with the view of making a closer reconnaissance, I all at once, by a sudden side look, became aware of a figure, posted on a ledge of rock, some hun-

dred paces on my flank, apparently in the act of taking aim at me. In order to make my espial more securely, I had esconced myself behind a large boulder, and the better to effect my purpose was taking off my cap, at the very moment I caught sight of this alarming apparition.

Bettering my position behind my bulwark, I followed my awkward neighbour's example, and levelled my rifle at him in my turn, over the top of the stone. No sooner was this done than my adversary quitted his post as quick as lightning, and cutting some ludicrous capers as he did so, disappeared in the adjoining bush.

Some minutes had elapsed after these mysterious movements, and I was still peering anxiously at the spot where I had last seen him, when I was startled by a heavy hand being laid upon my shoulder, a hard, weather-beaten visage confronting my own, and a voice exclaiming in deep, well-remembered tones:—

"Whip me for a nigger, squire, if I didn't take you for a grizzly;" the words being wound up by a low, characteristic "roulade" of laughter.

"Bryce Jannock, by all that's providential!"

"Aye, here he stands, and a massy it is that he does so; that dose o' blue pill you was markin' off for him, wouldn't ha' lengthened his days in the land, Master Philip."

"What, was that you, then, cutting those capers among the bushes?" asked I, laughing in my turn.

"Aye, and time too, I reckon, when you was squintin' so cruelly over your shootin'-ir'n."

"Why I was but following your own lead, Bryce."

"Aye, but I tuk ye, I tell ye, for a grizzly; wi' that heathenish beard, and Isabelly head-piece, bobbing and blinking over yon bit o' rock, blest if Ephraim himself wouldn't ha' sworn to you for own brother."

And the honest fellow regaled himself with another guttural chuckle at the circumstance.

"It's lucky though, you doffed the pelt in time, for I was nigh as a toucher scaling Truegroove on it, and it would ha' been a pity to sp'ile two beavers in a twelvemonth."

"Or waste a second lesson on close shaving," interjected I reproachfully.

"Soon as I see your smooth pow, I larfed like to bust; but when you tuk to your we'-pon so danderly, it's time, thinks I, for this child to 'cache.'"

"Was turning that suite of summersets what you call 'cashing,' Bryce? well, it's better than paying off in lead and powder anyhow."

"Why I tripped, d'ye see," rejoined he, partaking, though more dryly in my merri-ment, "as I was a coming down, agin a darned beechroot, which so'thing sp'iled the iligance of the performance."

"But added mightily to its impressiveness, I could scarcely lay on for laughing; well

you are a real godsend to me now, Bryce; let us go to the camp and have breakfast, and then you shall tell me how it has fared with yourself, Robin, and the rest of us, since we were scattered that foul night by the Blackfeet."

The loud report of a gun was now heard up the valley which I thought sounded like that of a smooth bore.

"Aye," said Bryce, confirming my conjecture, "you've hit it, and so I'll be bound too has Peg; what you know the v'ice of your old 'double' again. I was watching for the buck comin' down here when I spied you playin' b'ar behind the boulder, but as the critter'll be now turned into venison, it's little use our waitin' any longer."

"Have you heard any news of the piccanniny?" asked the hunter with an earnest air, as we proceeded together towards my camp, "neither the Delawares nor me can hear tell of any white gal in these parts; it's possible they may have carried her down

South or across the mountains, which'll lengthen out our trail not a little; but what tho,' it's only layin' in some more shoe leather, and thinkin' we're on a long moose-hunt; with patience and parseverance we'll lay the two ends together yet—so which way are we to turn our noses next, Squire?"

"For home, Bryce, and that without delay."

"For hum!" cried he in undisguised astonishment. "What and leave the young fa'n among the Philistines!"

The course of Jannock's comments was cut short by his catching sight of our little Shoshonee.

"Hullo!" exclaimed he, "what breed o' nigger's yon? Well if he don't look like a 'poor devil;' where on 'arth did ye pick him up? but bless my life is'nt that a gal I see settin' yonder? Ludamighty, squire, ye're queerly sorted; who would ha' thought now o' yon brown bread going down with an Englisher!"

Kosata sprang up at my signal and came towards us, the hunter eyeing her closely as she did so.

"It's a girl, sure enough, and one too I think you're not wholly unacquainted with."

"Dead beat, Squire, dead beat," said Jan-nock after taking a long look at her; "tidy cretur enough for a Redskin, but don't make her out no how."

"Nevertheless, you don't see her now for the first time, Bryce; look at her again, man, and see if you can't scour your memory."

As he gazed, his eyes began gradually to enlarge, and at length turning from the smiling subject of his observation to myself, he exclaimed with a half enquiring, half conjecturing look, "why she's as brown as my rifle butt, it can't be —— it ain't, sure—ly—you don't mean to say now it's——"

"Yes, Bryce, you need have no doubt about the matter, for there before you stands the young fawn."

In an instant she was clasped in the arms

of the exulting woodsman, and a hearty smack on either cheek gave token of his unfeigned joy at a meeting so utterly un hoped for.

Whilst sharing our breakfast by the side of the fire we had at length lighted, Jannock gave me the recital of his adventures from the time we separated.

When the Blackfeet rushed in upon our camp he had seized his rifle and plunged into the neighbouring bush, where under the friendly shade of night he lingered awhile to watch how matters might proceed. The two Delawares, also, as before mentioned, had no less promptly sought cover, and saved themselves; but poor Robin, less practised in back-woods life, was assailed by two of the savages ere prepared either to fight or fly. Bryce declared he had seen him actually down, and on the point of being scalped, when a timely shot from himself released him from the more pressing of his foes; that he had then been grappled by the other, and falling with him over the bank continued the strug-

gle in the water till another shot from one of the Delawares relieved him once more of his assailant, when taking advantage of the respite he had dashed over the stream, up the opposite bank, and for the time, as far as Bryce could judge, escaped.

That was the last that had been seen of him, for our enemies galled by the close fire they had received and aware of the smallness of our party, scoured the protecting cover and put the hardy trio to speedy flight.

Extricating themselves with care from the dangerous locality, and more familiar with the mountains than myself, the latter had then pushed on to the rendezvous at the Sweetwater, where they had spent some weeks in the vain expectation of being joined by their two comrades, and greatly puzzled to determine what course they should take next.

Whilst in this state of perplexity they got intelligence of a strong detachment of trappers being about to proceed across the moun-

tains into the Green river valley, and to this band, under the command of a celebrated partizan, the three hunters attached themselves, with the intention of re-entering the region of our disaster, and obtaining what information they could about us. The party had already been a week on the march when I fell in with my stout henchman as above related, in the higher part of the Sweetwater valley.

As devoted as ever to the cause he readily agreed to rejoin me, and set out immediately after breakfast to wind up his concerns with his leader, and bring back our valuable natives.

Having joined the brigade in the quality of free trapper, the duration of whose allegiance is perfectly optional, there existed no obstacle to the new arrangement, and it was scarcely yet noon when my eyes were gladdened by the sight of our three trusty auxiliaries marching into my camp.

I felt, I may say, like man new made on

the occasion, and my mind was relieved at once of a vast amount of anxiety that had hitherto weighed upon it.

Ere turning our steps homewards, it was, however, necessary to determine with greater certainty the fate of our missing comrade, Hood, an object we fortunately achieved in a manner altogether unexpected.

Among those who had joined the trading force on their march were two trappers, who had been pursuing their vocation in the wilder recesses of the mountains. One of these men had been a great crony of Jannock's while attached to the same command, and on the evening of the day we are recording came over to our camp for the purpose of paying him a farewell visit. In the course of conversation the circumstance of our surprise by the Blackfeet was mentioned, and various conjectures made as to poor Robin's probable fate.

The opinion of the new comer was unfavorable to the supposition of his safety, and in

support of his view he related to us the following incident:—Whilst he and his partner were one evening (not long before) engaged in laying their traps in the secluded valley which was the seat of their operations, they observed, staggering down the mountain side, a figure which their practised vision at once recognized to be that of a white man, in an evidently disabled state. On their presenting themselves to him somewhat suddenly, he had scarcely strength to raise his piece in self-defence, and on finding they were friends, to utter a few incoherent words in explanation of his condition.

His features were covered with blood from a severe scalp wound he had received, and so attenuated, as well as his entire frame, by starvation as scarcely to present a human appearance. From his statement it appeared the party he belonged to had been attacked by Indians several days before, whom he had narrowly escaped from, and whilst wandering in the mountains, he knew not whither, had

been reduced to his present extremity by famine. They took him with them to their hut, supplied him with food, and on their return from their trapping expedition brought him on to the rendezvous (which being a favorite station of the trappers, happened to be that also of their own people), where he was left, still suffering from his injuries.

He was understood by our informant to be a new hand inexperienced in mountain life, and over young to encounter its hardships, and it was these reasons that induced the old trapper to augur so unfavorably for our own missing comrade.

On comparing the dates of the two occurrences, Jannock and I thought they corresponded sufficiently to warrant the conclusion that the famished fugitive could be no other than our ill-starred Robin himself, who had unluckily reached the rendezvous the very day after his comrades had quitted it.

There was now therefore nothing further to be done than proceed thither, ascertain the

fact, and if still alive take him up, which we might do the more readily, as the place lay in the line of our intended route.

To this piece of good fortune was added another, viz., our engaging the worthy hunter who had so essentially served us by his information, to accompany us on our journey to the settlements. He was a free trapper of the name of Wolfe, a weather-beaten, half-bandit looking subject, but well trained in his business, and promising to make a useful acquisition to our force.

By these happy and unlooked for additions to it, we now made up a party of six, for the protection of our rescued heroine; and the next morning pursued our way eastwards, in those light and cheerful spirits so potential in alleviating toil and abridging space.

On arriving at the rendezvous we found it thronged with the disbanded members of numerous trapping bands, who, as the fur bearing animals were beginning to cast their coats, enjoyed a temporary respite from their

toils, for which they were now recompensing themselves by plunging into every species of excess that the arrival of the store caravans gave means for indulging in.

Not wishing to introduce Kosata to this scene of licence we halted some distance from the spot, and leaving Jannock and the rest of our men in charge of her, I proceeded thither with Wolfe only, when we at once got tidings of Robin, and shortly afterwards had the satisfaction of meeting him in person, now much recovered, and, indeed, both ready and willing (having had eno' for the time of backwood's life), to accompany us on our return.

Ere setting forth, however, on what was likely to be a journey of several months, supplies had to be laid in, means of transport provided, and additional recruits engaged.

For these purposes I accordingly got a bill cashed by the clerk in charge of the post, and with its proceeds purchased the necessary number of horses to mount ourselves, as well as for baggage and reliefs. An active and

well broken mare was procured for Kosata, as well as a small buffalo skin tent, to shelter her from inclemencies of the weather.

I deemed it advisable also to enlist here three additional hands, in order that whatever might be the requirements of the party, our *protégée* might have the constant protection of an adequate guard.

Jannock, whom I commissioned to select them, picked out for me three of the best men in the encampment, all of them well mounted, and though their services were engaged at rather a high figure, we found no reason subsequently to repent the arrangement.

CHAPTER XII.

ALL being prepared we at length set our faces determinately homewards, taking leave of our roistering trapper friends at noon of the 15th July, and shaping our course along the banks of our old familiar friend—the Sweetwater.

As the reader may be already surfeited with the details of wilderness travel, and our return journey proved comparatively devoid of adventure, I will abstain from inflicting on him the daily record of our proceedings, and note down only the few incidents that occurred to vary their monotony.

■ Journeying in easy stages, it was not until the middle of August we entered the region of

the Black Hills—the scene of our last wintering, and which cost us again, in getting thro' them, several days of tedious and toilsome travel. It was, consequently, with no little joy and satisfaction we at length extricated ourselves from its passes, so rife with every sort of danger, and shortly afterwards reached Laramies Fork, to regale our eyes once more on verdant pastures and a tranquil stream.

In the more broken country beyond we fell in with the buffalo, and used our best exertions to renew our nearly finished stock of provisions.

It was pitiful at times to see the havock made by our hunters among the herds, numbers being killed for the sake of their tongues alone, and entire carcasses left on the plain for the benefit of the wolves and vultures.

In the first week in September we arrived at the forks of the Platte or Nebraska, and crossing the lower arm, entered upon the great rolling prairie.

All this time we had been singularly exempt from either alarm or molestation by the Indians, which great contrast to the circumstances of our advance I attributed to the superior strength of the party, and the vigilant look out I took care should be maintained by them. Yet though destined to escape annoyance in this quarter, it was otherwise with respect to evils scarce less serious, arising from our own improvidence. With a party consisting almost wholly of hunters, we were continually on the verge of starvation.

The buffaloes seemed to have abandoned the country through which we passed, and we could get no game.

After travelling over it for several weeks on daily diminishing rations, we at last found our wallets empty, and the men, who in spite of all I could do, had been as recklessly wasteful of their provender whilst plentiful, as they were now dejected at its failure, began to talk in a gloomy tone of killing one of the baggage animals.

It was on the evening of the 23rd September, as the cavalcade was filing slowly along the banks of the river, Jannock, Kosata, and myself at its head, we met the hunters, returning bootlessly and sullenly from a large 'cast' they had made upon the prairie, on the issue of which hung the fate of our plumpest sumpter horse. Their hunt had been unproductive, and to avoid positive starvation, orders were now given for the slaughter of a two-year-old colt, whose unhappy fate it was, having been but lightly loaded on the journey, to be in somewhat better case than its fellows.

In the mean time we took up our night's quarters by the river side, on a sort of cape, which left us exposed only on one side to any possible attack from the prairie. At its apex, or safer end, Kosata's tent was pitched, with the turbid Nebraska (here upwards of a mile in width) for her next neighbour and natural guardian.

The orange glow of evening—the evening

of an Indian summer—was reflected on its waters, and mantled the adjacent waste in that mellow light which transformed its savage aspect for the moment into that of an Elysian field.

There are some impassive spirits to be found whom the daily wonderwork of nature, her glorious displays of the solemn, the lovely and the wild, seem never in anywise to affect; others again there are on whom they never pall, awakening rather their best affections, and stimulating their loftiest thoughts.

Something of this sort was my own, such I believed too was Kosata's; and when I beheld her after her long day's ride, regardless of hunger and fatigue, pensively seated on the river brink and looking at the parting luminary with the same abstracted air as on the occasion when I first fell in with her, I could not refrain from placing myself at her side and asking *en plaisantant* to be made the partner of her meditations.

“You are looking,” I said “at the sunset,

dear Kosata, as you were when I first saw you on the Wind River, and thought you," added I taking her hand "the loveliest genie that ever had its dwelling in the desert."

Kosata looked down with maiden bashfulness, but I could see her eyes brighten beneath their lashes at the compliment.

"Why was it, my brother, I knew not you were then near me? why did the river flow between us?"

"Ah, why? methinks it should not have done so; how nearly it had parted us for ever. If fate should still ordain this parting, my Kosata, be assured your image will still abide with me, as a beauteous star of past happy though troubled times; but why art thou so sad, my sister?"

"Do I seem sad, my brother?"

"Yes, you are peopling that sunset sky with forms of sorrow; the memories perhaps of your faithful Arklans, or those earlier and dearer friends you had half forgotten; is it not so?"

"All gone, now, Felipe, all but you. See you that flower?" she said, pointing to a gentianella that was floating before us down the stream, "me think that flower Kosata; buffalo tore it from river bank—"

"Just as you were torn, you are thinking, from your home."

"—cast into Nebraska with him hoof—"

"Even as thou wast too rudely cast upon the stream of life."

"—and now it floating away—"

"I trust to some happier nook where it will again touch, take root, and flourish, like yourself."

"No tell, Felipe; Great Spirit know all.

Here then was the secret of her pensiveness. She had been musing, as was not unnatural, on her outcast unsettled lot, and felt despondent as she gaged the future with the ominous dividing rod of the past.

"The Great Spirit watches over you both, Kosata; over the wild flower on the water, and that I have reclaimed from the desert.

Cheerfully then let us confide in Him, my Penserosa, nor doubt that, after guiding us through so many dangers, He will bring us in safety to our haven—”

“Now, squire, look alive—here’s your hoss a comin’ ready to run for the squire’s plate.”

Such was the profane challenge, that, uttered in the voice of Jannock, broke in upon our sublimated communing.

He had brought us a platter of meat from the camp fire, and having spread a buffalo robe on the ground for Kosata, with many encomiums on his contribution, invited us to try it for ourselves.

After carving us our several portions he paused awhile himself, and I could see a covert smile upon his face as he watched us fall to work with the keen appetite caused by prolonged abstinence.

The provant, it must be said, was unexceptionable, and ere a quarter of an hour had passed, the piece of baggage horse (about six pounds weight) had vanished like a vision

from the trencher, leaving not so much as a drop of gravy behind.

It was as I began to loosen my belt after my hearty feed that the hunter's ill-suppressed hilarity broke forth in a full unstinted peal of laughter.

"Aye, let it out, let it out, squire; another hole yet—there's some more a' comin'—'taint such bad stuff arter all, it seems, that hoss beef; who would ha' thought now, o' people eatin' their critters arter ridin' 'em, (he was here harping on some arguments I had used in previous discussions on the subject) makin' 'em travel arter they're dead—well, never mind, it's all down hill now, and a short stage at that (ha! ha! ha!) hold hard, Bryce, hold hard, old hoss," said he at last, holding his sides, and bringing himself up with difficulty.

"Lud me, squire," continued he, taking due time to recover himself, "d'ye remember that time we was a sarchin' amcng the Blue-nose charcoal for somebody (filling up his

meaning by inclining his head towards Kosata), and we picked up some 'coon bones, which you thought was—what they wasn't, and while you wassippingsquash gruel to drown down care, I said you'd want stiffer stuff nor that if you'd ever to hunt her up hereaway, and maybe might find hoss or dog goin' down your throat some day, whereupon you said it 'ud have to find the road for itself; d'ye mind that, Master Philip?" asked the worthy Bryce, giving me a friendly poke in the ribs; "this hoss doos, this here old hoss, ha! ha! ha! ha!"

I was wholly at a loss to account for this burst of jocularly on the part of Jannock, usually so imperturbable and grave; he could not have been drinking, as we possessed no liquor, neither would it have much moved him if he had, so I was fain to set it down to lightheadedness, produced by an unusual fasting spell.

I beg to observe, Bryce," returned I with a gravity I intended should convey rebuke,

“that my scruples had reference to dog only, and by no means extended to horse, which I always considered a much more—”

I here found myself at a loss for the precise word wanted.

“More what, squire?”

“Eatable an—”

“Aye, eatable’s the word, and no mistake, if that trencher speak truth.”

“An animal.”

“And didn’t I tell you, for as green as you was then, you might come to it all some day? Well, and ain’t you come to it now? and ain’t it gone down? and ain’t it good? and ain’t you ready for some more to go down? and don’t you think if we could only get it, you could find a snug corner for a tit bit of two-year-old dog mutton? and—”

Jannock was overstraining his advantage, and provoked resistance.

“No,” I returned, “Bryce, were I to make my belly the grave of the faithful and intelligent partner of my fortunes, I should look

upon myself as no better than a cannibal ; between the canine race and the equine, I draw a very wide distinction."

" You may draw what distinctions you please, squire, but if I had been one of the barkers when you was a pitching into that six-pounder as is gone, I would ha' trusted my four legs a good deal sooner than your wide distinctions. But, heigh me ! ain't it just a wonderment to think we're a windin up the very trail we was then a daffin' about, and nosed out the poor straylin' so cleverly ? though it's Providence arter all as has played the game for us. God bless her ! say I," added the honest fellow, as he rose to remove our dinner things, " for a young fa'n, and (with a sly wink to enforce his rustic pun) ' a little dear ' to boot."

Returning to us presently, he laid himself down, and got out his pipe.

" I see," said he as he did so, " Pegtop sloping this way ; we'll just ask him now whether two-year-old dog mutton ain't as fla-

vorsome as hoss beef, or filly veal; he has stowed away all sorts of creturs in his time, old and young, four-legged, two-legged, and no-legged, from a grizzly to a rattlesnake, and if ever there's a resurrection of the beasts, he'll better deserve the name of Noah's Ark, I'm thinkin', than Pegtop."

Bryce and the Indian then conferred together for a short space, seemingly with some earnestness. When they had done, the former instead of pursuing our previous theme (of which *en parenthèse*, I had got heartily tired) asked me rather absently for some tobacco, on getting which he lighted his pipe, and sat silently smoking, with his eyes fixed on a faint light that had become visible in the darkening distance.

The beautiful glow of the sky had passed away, and the shadows and mists of night were now settling all around.

Kosata at length arose, and retired to her tent.

This little movement aroused Bryce from

his musing fit, and pointing to the distant glow on the sky line, he asked me what I imagined it to be.

"I should conceive it," I replied, "to be the first streaks of the moonrise."

"Well, and I s'pose most of our chaps yonder as is coddlin' so comfortable in their blankets, would be pretty much of the same opinion. May be they wouldn't snore quite so loud if they knowed that glimmer came from the campfire of two or three hundred Pawnee warriors. I didn't believe it when Peg told me, but I've been watchin' it myself this half-hour, and I reckon he ain't said nothin' but the truth. So with the river on one side, and these varmints on the other, we're no better, as I may say, than atween the devil and the deep sea all this while."

This was rather startling intelligence, (for in this return journey, with a charge of such moment on my hands, I felt sensitively alive to every thing that might concern its safety), and as I wrapped myself in my blanket for

the night, the Pawnee watchfires took precedence in my thoughts alike, of floating gentianellas, horse beef, and dog mutton.

The following day we shaped our course cautiously along the river bank, the party keeping carefully together with the exception of two scouts we had thrown out on our right flank and in front.

Nothing occurred to cause alarm till evening, when as we were on the point of halting for the night, our advanced patrol rode hurriedly up with the intelligence that a party of Indians had sighted him, and were then coming rapidly down upon us.

The river being luckily close at hand, we collected our little company upon the bank, with Kosata and the horses between it and us, and prepared to receive the enemy with due attentions.

They soon appeared in sight—a band of about twenty—all painted and armed for war, galloping towards us with the yells and gesticulations of so many devils.

Our hunters pronounced them to be Pawnees, and not wishing to shed blood unnecessarily, and have them dogging our trail for weeks to come, I directed Jannock, who knew something of their language, to advance and warn them to approach no nearer. Seeing our steady front and knowing the fatal superiority of our arms, they halted just in time to save their ranks from being thinned to half their number, and their leader coming forward, Bryce entered into a parley with him, the result of which we were somewhat anxiously awaiting, (covering our spokesman the while with our pieces) when another war cry reached our ears from the other side of the stream, which was no sooner heard by our sprightly visitors, than wheeling abruptly round on their tracks, they departed in the same whirlwind fashion they had come.

The force on the other side of the Platte proved to be their inveterate enemies, the Sioux, and as, though broad, the water was perfectly fordable, we had every prospect of

being the unwilling witnesses, if not indeed still more unwilling parties to a pitched battle.

To avoid being compromised by this state of things, we resolved on making an instantaneous retreat whilst the belligerents were too much occupied with each other to lay any plans for intercepting us.

Favored by the fast increasing darkness, we therefore doubled on the track of the morning for a space of some miles, and then made a flank movement to the South, which, though the additional labour greatly distressed our cattle, effected the object we had in view of getting a safe offing from our troublesome neighbours.

Some few weeks subsequently we learnt a bloody battle had been fought the following day, on which both sides had left upon the field a number of their choicest warriors.

This was the last danger that might be called peculiar to it, encountered on our long, prairie march, though occasional suffering was

yet to be experienced from want of water and shortness of provisions.

Two horses more had to be sacrificed to our necessities ere we reached, on the 24th October, Fort Osage, the first frontier post of the States, after a full month's journey from the battle field on the Nebraska.

Here we indulged ourselves with three day's rest, during which I paid and discharged the two Delawares who had done us such valuable service, as well as all our white hunters, except Jannock, whom I had prevailed on to accompany me to England; Robin (whose will and engagement went together) and Wolfe, who intended visiting, after many years' absence, his relations "down east;" the whole of the *congediés* well contented with their treatment.

The reduced party then proceeded by easy stages to New York, where we arrived in health and safety about the end of the ensuing November.

Thus was my long and painful land pilgrimage of nearly four thousand miles happily completed. On the day after our arrival I took Kosata to church, where we returned our grateful thanks to the Almighty for having brought us to its end in safety, after aiding us so signally throughout.

Deeming a short respite, necessary after so long-continued fatigues, we remained a week in the transatlantic metropolis, which was made useful in initiating my fair ward in the usages of civilised life, providing her with its various requirements, and practising her in her half-forgotten English. Then with light hearts we entered on the last stage of our travels, embarking the first week of December in one of the fine packet ships for Liverpool, where, after a three weeks' prosperous voyage, the *Young Fawn* and myself again touched our native land, the former, fourteen years after her first departure from it.

CHAPTER XIII.

HERE we were then in England again, breathing its familiar breezes, within a step of the threshold of home.

It was natural we should feel elated, that our hearts should swell with joy and hope—joy that our labours were now ended, and hope which already grasped their prize.

Taking post horses the day after our landing we set out for the town of ———, where our friends whom we had advertised of our arrival, were anxiously waiting to receive us.

On our chaise drawing up at Mr. Dalham's

door, we found it thronged with the gratulant faces of his family, who, though quite ignorant of the true quality of their fair visitor, were ready to receive us both with a welcome of the warmest kind.

Mrs. Dalham (her apprehension quickened perhaps by circumstances that might have come within her cognizance as her lord's moiety), at once discovered her young ladyship's resemblance to her mother, with whom she had been well acquainted, and by the meaning glance she gave her husband, and marked *empressement* of her services, convinced me she had penetrated our secret; whilst the younger members of the family, swiftly taken by the winning manners and whimsical parlance of the fair stranger, knew no bounds to the interest and endearments they displayed towards her.

My little Susan I had the happiness of finding in excellent health, and wonderfully advanced since we parted nineteen months before, in growth and intelligence.

She soon became a great favourite with our heroine, and was never so delighted as when (imitating the native naiads of the Wind River), she employed the Christmas nosegays in decking her hair with flowers, and listening to the mutilated English that fell from her smiling lips.

Happy (as our borrowed hours may be on earth), was the evening that celebrated the young heiress' advent among her true and steadfast friends, but it being highly important under the circumstances that time should be taken by the forelock, we limited our rejoicings to this little space, and on the morrow took our way betimes to the Vicarage, where Mr. Felton, who had been, as opportunity served, kept *au courant* of our proceedings, received as with the exultation natural to his upright and somewhat enthusiastic character.

Here we took into our confidence the old nurse, France Jeffray, who was almost beside herself with joy on being introduced to

her long lost foster child, and now, as heretofore, proved of signal utility in effecting an object highly necessary to the success of our main design, viz., by means of dress and otherwise, to render her resemblance to her deceased parent so complete as to produce an infallible impression, even at first sight; our said design being to bring about an interview between the two principals in the drama, and leave the issue to be decided (as it alone satisfactorily could be), by the agency of their own feelings.

The old woman was allowed but the remainder of the day to accomplish her loving labour (which her recollections of her former mistress, as well as the possession of some of her disused wearing apparel, well qualified her for doing), and to judge from the remarks of some of its older members, when she presented herself to the breakfast party next morning, her efforts had succeeded to a miracle.

Such were the preparations, and such the

time resolved on for achieving our final "coup."

A pony, now grey with age, which had once been Lady Laura's favorite palfrey, was procured thro' Mr. Felton's means from the Leighton Arms, in whose pastures it had long enjoyed a dignified retirement, and on this, duly groomed and caprisoned, was seated, about eleven o'clock, our beautiful but somewhat anxious heroine, attired in a green riding habit with wide gipsy hat and plume, and looking, according to the astonished Mrs. Marton's unbiassed testimony, "for all the world like poor Leddy Lowry as was, come to life again."

Pondering our emprise I then took her rein, and followed by Jannock, who had expressed a wish to attend us, we shaped our course at a leisurely pace towards the park.

It was one of those black, chill, semi-frosty mornings so peculiar to our trying winters, the air penetrating through the thickest clothing, and producing a sensation of searching

cold such as I had never felt, even at many degrees below zero, in America.

The dull iron colored sky shewed no tokens of the sun, whose position was mere matter of speculation.

On the brown herbage of the park the dews were still standing as they fell, neither frozen nor evaporated, and with the penalty in view serving us effectual notice against trespassing.

Over it the north east wind swept with lugubrious sound, and filled with a world of moans the ancient oaks, now denuded of all their foliage, save where some feebler boughs snapped by a summer storm still bore its withered wealth, and as the blast rushed through it broke on the mournful concert with a freezy rustle.

Numbed by the bitter cold, the deer were seen huddled together under the lee of their wooded haunts. The cattle still couchant in their lairs, or standing stupidly beside them waited for the sun getting out ere they found heart to feed. Even in the bustling rookery

but few of its denizens were visible, and these, foot-frozen to their airy roosts, looked down in silence on the scene as though half besotted with their misery.

All the inferior creation, bird and brute alike, seemed to share in the chilling "tristesse" of the hour, but man, inspired by his intelligence, was abroad and active, and the ringing sound of the axe broke pleasantly on the ear as we passed along.

A party of woodcutters had beset a stalwart oak which had already cost them several days of toil, and were now engaged, with coats thrown off and sleeves turned up, in dealing the last strokes for its destruction.

On the side of an eminence hard by, crested by a stone tablet forced from the perpendicular and somewhat defaced by time, sat in pensive mood our old acquaintance Blayfield, his double barrel crossed upon his knees, and his eyes resting on the shrunken form of poor old Norman, who in the somnolency of advanced age lay on the grass beside him. The animal

raised its nose into the air as we approached. and then getting with difficulty upon his legs feebly wagged his tail by way of welcome.

“The old dog’s time seems drawing to a close, my friend,” said I, as I went up to the old man, leaving my companions behind, “has he long been in this failing state?”

“Ever syne last winter ; a got blind about Christmas, and an ugly, ill-tempered b—h of a cow druv’ her horn into him i’ the spring, which has made him lame as well ; the very deer come nibbling about him now, and the bucks will give him a sly poke at times when he rambles too near their cover ; hey me ! I should like to ha’ seen them at that game in days I could tell o’ ; but as they say, every dog mun ha’ his day, and they might say every human likewise.”

“Time tells on us all, my friend—spares neither man nor beast, but I trust his hand has been laid less heavily on your worthy old master, Lord Leighton.”

"Nay, t'maister mun ha' his share o't as well as t'rest on us, but I see he's taking the air this morning; if ye'll but bide a blink where y'are, you'll be able to judge for yersel." (A figure wrapped in a cloak was seen in the distance slowly coming towards us from the direction of the castle.) "You're the gen'leman, I'm thinking, as brought us back the old hound last summer?"

"He seems to think me an old friend, at any rate," I answered, as the old creature drew near, and snuffed at my boots complacently.

"I thought I knowed your favour — ah, welladay! you might as well ha' brought us back his mistress too, while you were about it. Heigho!" he continued, half speaking to himself, "I begin to think Mother Brackley's lines winna co' true after all, and the old dog there will go his ways without bringing us any nearer to our wishes."

"Where was your critter raised, fri'nd?"

inquired Bryce Jannock, as he made his appearance rather suddenly from behind the oak tree.

"Where was he raised?" replied the other testily, after taking a leisurely look at the new comer, "why where *sud* he be raised but here in Leighton? I raised him myself, we call it rearin' here; my name's Joe Blayfield."

"Well, frind, I ain't nothin' to say agin it; wherever he was raised, it's plain to be seen he's nigh goin' under now, and if these critters has their happy huntin' grounds, as the Injyns don't stick to tell on, why this may be as good a startin' point as any other; but talkin' o' raisin', it's a clean wonderment to me now how yon fine old feller as I've known tire down a full grown moose—you'll have no mooses here, belike stranger—could ha' come by his wind in this piddlin' bit o' pastur'."

"Piddlin' bit o' pastur'!" repeated Blayfield, in high dudgeon at the term, "Leighton Park's three miles long by good two,

wide, which, I take it, is a bigger pastur' than ever *you've* grazed in afore, my chap."

Low and deep, but long and uncontrolled was the backwoodsman's laughter at this unlucky speech, reeking, as it would seem to him, with such unconscionable 'greenness;' recovering himself, however, with gradual effort, and re-addressing the now still more indignant keeper—

"I meant no offence, friend—none whatsoever—but your idees is like your clear-ins, so'thin too green and shortcut for this child, though very nat'ral I dar'say to a Britisher. Why, man, the pastur's I've ranged over for the better part o' my days is as many miles big as yourn is yerds; its fences is four oceans, its woods you might travel in for weeks together, and its fishponds is almighty licks as would float a fust rate man o' war in 'em; but as I said afore, I mean no offence; I was only a thinkin' how in natur' it could be, that in a clearin' no bigger than this'n,—if you prefer the term

you're welcome to it, we won't thicken up about a breath o' wind—I say it's just a wonderment to me that a critter with the grit that critter had could ha' got it in a clearin' like this'n, where, as far as I can see, there ain't neither moose, b'ar, nor buffalo."

"Got it! why it got it from its blood, man; from its blood and its breed to be sure; it's a blood hanimal is yon, and that brings wind and bottom, as everybody knows who can tell a dog's head from its tail; now if you was to take a cur—whether four-legged or two-legged, it don't matter — to them almighty fine pastur's you brag on, d'ye think you'd change its natur, or mend its manners by giving it four oceans to lick or big fish-ponds either? Now to't' sort, a cur it would go there, and for all its lickins, a cur it would come back—the same beggarly, scurvy, ill-conditioned ——"

"Take breath, frind, take breath," returned Bryce, with grave *sang froid*, "and don't load

it on over hard, or maybe you'll bust your barr'l, and that makes ugly neighbours."

Wishing to lay the breeze that seemed springing up between the two woodsmen, I inquired of Blayfield what might be the prophetic lines he had alluded to.

"They're all down here, Sir," he replied, recovering his composure with a strong effort and leading me to the mouldering stone that topped the eminence, muttering, however, as he did so, "that chap's a forrenner, I take it, or he'd never be running down old England i' that way. Mother Brackley was a wise woman as ever lived here, three hundred year agone, and foretelled things as was to come; folks ca'd her a witch, and burnt her for one in a spot hard by yon alders, which they call the witch's hole to this day; but her sayings was kept in mind by the old wives of the place, and there was one o' them about our Leighton, which a queer old lord as lived here a hundred and fifty year back got carved on yon-

der stone, where it's to be read still. I'm no great scollard myself, but they tell me it consarns our heiress as ought to be, that is (expressing himself more cautiously), as *sud* ha' been, if things had fa'n out as they *sud* ha' fa'n."

Kneeling down by the old tablet I easily deciphered its inscription, which (probably by the old woodsman's care) had been kept clear of Time's Indian rubber—moss. It was in old English characters, and ran thus :

When Normann dies on Normann's mounde,
Ye heire of Leighton shall bee founde.

"Ha' ye made it out, sir?" inquired the keeper, as I got up from my task, "it's summat about Norman, ain't it?"

I recited the lines for his information.

"Aye, well, you must know, in times by-gone, when the first of the old family (they're all o' Norman breed, mind ye) comed here, they had heavy hands, I've heerd, o' their own, and were rayther too fond o' layin' them

on the bodies and goods o' their poor neighbours, till at last they could stand it no longer; so one fine mornin' they riz up, killed all the forrenners they could come at, both lords and jacks, and buried the dead bodies, it is said, in this very spot, which has gone by the name of Norman's mound ever syne. Now some folks says the prophecy must be fulfilled by some o' the same stock giving up the ghost here, while other some, and Joe Blayfield's one on 'em, thinks it will stand ekelly good if this old dog here takes their place, for he's Norman as well as them both in name and natur', the breed having come over with the family, and therefore quite as like to clear the riddle for us, and help the wise woman to her meanin'. The idee struck me of a suddenty about five year ago, and I tells my mind to Gammer Green, who says there's more in it than folk think for, so syne then I've brought the old creter here nigh every day, to do his best for us; but now he's so near his end it grieves me sore to think——"

The keeper's speech was interrupted by a low howl from the subject of his praise, and turning together towards the spot, we beheld our old and faithful follower stretched on the ground in the last spasms of expiring life.

"There! that's the last tune we shall ever have from his pipes: there lies old Norman, dead on Norman's mound; dy'e think now, sir, mother Brackley knowed o' this three hundred years ago?"

"I have little doubt of it," returned I abstractedly, as I mused on a sudden idea that occurred to me.

"Ah, well-a-day! now half her wise sayin's been fulfilled it grips the very heart o' me to think how clean agin all likelihood it is anything should come fro' the rest on't."

I here called to the young heiress who had remained at the other side of the oak, hidden by it from view, and turning again to the repining keeper asked:—

"But why should not the rest of it come true Joe? the necromantic art was much

studied in days of yore, and wise women knew more than we do; Mrs. Brackley has been put to death no doubt, but her spell may yet be in operation. Let me see again (going to the stone) what does that last line say,

“The heire of Leighton shall be founde.”

“Now this seems to be very express, it strikes me it would almost be a sin to doubt it, we see, ourselves, she has furnished us with the dead dog, why should she not as easily provide us with a living heiress?”

“O, sir,” replied he with an apologetic smile, as though he suspected I was playing upon him “you know how matters stand wi’ us—”

“Nevertheless, such is my faith in Mrs. Brackley’s veracity, that if you’ve no particular objection, I’ll try a little bit of conjuring on my own part, and put the old lady on her mettle.”

The keeper retreated a little way down the hillock, then stopped, held his breath, and

awaited in some trepidation the result of my glamour.

Our heroine on her pony in compliance with my secret signal, now advanced, and halted half way up the opposite slope, while, waving my walking stick three times round my head, I improvised the following exorcism :—

“O thou who on this fatal mound
Hast done to death our hapless hound,
By those dread spells that mortals fear
I charge thee now to make appear,
Before Joe Blayfield—waiting for her,
His truant mistress Lady Laura,
Appear ! appear !”

The invoked now came forward.

As slowly before the old man's eyes, arose, apparently from out of the earth, the likeness of his long lost lady, he recoiled aghast at the sight, his legs tottered underneath him, and his whole bearing seemed to shew he had got under the fire of Mother Brackley's witchcraft a good deal sooner than he had bargained for ; but when his riveted gaze had more fully

quoted the smiling face of the apparition, fear, doubt, and every other sensation were lost in that of eager, unbounded joy. Stepping up to the side of her palfrey, he seized the fair hand that guided it, and carried it with idolatrous unction to his lips.

While thus indulging his emotion in the belief that, in its object, unchanged by the fifteen years that had passed by, he beheld his old and long mourned mistress, accosting her in accordance with the impression, my sense of the pathetic and sublime was on the point of giving way to that of the ludicrous, on Jan-nock remarking: "Massy, me! if he ain't a takin' the fa'n for the doe, squire," when a loud warning cry from the carriage road of "Take care, sir, the tree's falling—take care, young lady!" recalled our attention to our position.

The choppers had been plying their task unremittingly whilst we were engaged in our interesting conference, and had so far cloven through the oak trunk that a sudden

gust of wind which sprang up sufficed to overcome the passive resistance of what remained, and as we happened to be posted on the lee side, gave it a determined inclination towards us. Warned of our jeopardy by the friendly voice, I instantly grasped the pony's rein, and endeavoured to draw it away from the line of danger, but, held by the unaccountable perverseness that often seizes these animals on such occasions, it resisted all my efforts, and backed still further towards the point of peril. Amidst the shouts, shrieks and exclamations of all around the branching top of the tree came crashing down, bringing us all three, man, horse, and rider—beneath it to the ground.

CHAPTER XIV.

BEYOND a sharp stripe over the face, from one of the terminal twigs, I arose myself unhurt; the luckless pony, which had come in contact with a more massive bough, appeared to be killed outright; and poor Kosata I beheld stretched on the ground beside it, bereft of sense and motion. Not far from the scene of accident gushed the little mineral spring, mentioned in the earlier part of this story, and as soon as I observed the hapless maiden's state, thither I sped for some of its contents to resuscitate her.

On returning to the spot where I had left





her, I found she had passed into the charge of the individual who had given us the friendly but ineffectual warning from the road, and who now, his cloak and hat thrown by, was gazing upon the prostrate form he supported, with looks in which astonishment, alarm, and distress were rapidly and painfully alternating.

“My God, how like! her very image! the pulse beat yet! O for water!” were the exclamations that escaped from him.

Having presented my hat filled with the needful fluid, he sprinkled some of it upon her face, which presently began to shew signs of animation, and as, after careful examination, no outward hurt could be discovered, we came to the conclusion that the shock of the fall was the chief injury she had sustained, thence drawing strong hopes of her recovery.

Lord Leighton (for such, as the reader will have inferred, was the personage last presented to him), having taken the control of matters, so soon as a satisfactory process of revival had

set in, ordered means of transport to be brought with all haste from the Castle, whilst, on my own part, I despatched a messenger to the Vicarage, with an instant summons for the old nurse, France Jeffray.

Unspeakably shocked at the accident which had thus threatened to defeat all my hopes and labours on the very eve of their fulfilment, I took my place among the bearers with a complication of feelings which it was impossible any of those around me could participate—save only the grey and timebent grand-sire, who, at the other side of the litter, with his eyes ever bent upon its burden, guided the sad cortége to its destination.

Blayfield's discovery, or rather misconception, had, meantime blown abroad through the neighbourhood like wild-fire, and clusters of eager faces from that of grey hair eld to infancy itself, presented themselves at every step to get a passing glance at their returned heiress.

The mansion was speedily reached; and

entering the halls of her father's in hapless guise, the interesting outcast was laid on a couch, that had been hastily prepared for her in one of the lower chambers.

Whilst myself anxiously awaiting the arrival of the old nurse, as well as a physician, who had been also sent for, Lord Leighton knelt down by her bedside, and, his arm resting on her pillow, his eye fastened on her countenance, gave way to a strength of emotion, which stoical and strong as was his nature, seemed to stir it to its inmost depths. Perhaps expression might be found in the words of our great dramatist.

“O thy mother!”

“I am a very foolish, fond old man,
'Three score and upward.”

“You must bear with me;
Pray you now forget and forgive.”

“Have I caught thee?
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence like foxes.”

Desisting at length from its indulgence, and turning to me, as though for the first time conscious of my presence, while a slight start betrayed his recognition, he exclaimed :—

“Ah that portrait! how can I doubt it now? where have you brought her from?”

Ere I could well answer, he continued: “I ought to apologize for my abruptness, but I beg you will inform me as briefly as may be (for time is measured to an old man) whom you believe that lady to be, and where she has come from?”

Summoned thus suddenly to my part, and swayed by the remains of former prudential policy, I felt a momentary embarrassment in answering, perceiving which, he continued appealingly: “Sir, trifle not with a father’s feelings, but tell me all you know of my dear child; she has come, has she not, from America?”

Judging the time had arrived when a plain story would be the best, I replied :—

"She has come from the American wilderness, where I found her dwelling among a tribe of savages."

"Savages!"

He was silent for a time, as if lost in amazement, then asked:—

"In the name of heaven, how came she there?"

"The tale, my lord, is long and would distress you; we will reserve it for another time; I may say, however, she was carried there by kidnappers, suborned by a near relation in whose path she was an obstacle."

"Kidnappers! ha, what, a plot? Is Cyrus concerned in this?"

I gave no answer, save so far as my looks conveyed assent.

After pausing awhile, therefore, as though to master in his own mind the bearings of the hideous crime I had revealed to him, he proceeded: "And you—"

"In pursuance of a solemn vow to that

effect, I made it my task to seek her out; it was a duty I had long pledged myself to, by her father's sick-bed, and over her mother's grave, and sincerely do I rejoice that, though late, it has been fulfilled."

"Sir, the God of the oppressed has wrought with you, and will reward you, but of that, anon—that mother was—"

"The portrait you have seen informs you—Lady Ardcapell—at one time, Lady Laura Farleton—your daughter, I believe?"

The old man gave me a look, that long clung to my remembrance, then dropped upon his knees, and after offering up a brief prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty, clasped his restored, and now reviving grand-child, in the long deferred embrace of paternal love.

My task was done.

Leaving the two relatives to the hallowed interchange of their feelings, I quitted the room under the over-powering pressure of my own, and repairing to the vicarage, relieved

my breast by communicating to the worthy clergyman the events of the few momentous hours that had passed since we had parted.

After cheering ourselves with mutual felicitations, I requested his advice as to the expediency of resorting to law for the further security of our *protégée*. On this point he observed with his usual good sense, that as our chief object had been effected, he thought there was now, considering the age of the young lady—the proofs we possessed of her identity, and the already widely known fact of her return—little further danger to be apprehended on the part of the delinquent cousin. That as his interest was but prospective, it would, as far as ourselves were concerned, be sufficient to place in Lord Leighton's hands an authenticated record from the first, of the events and circumstances that so deeply compromised his nephew, and so leave him to take what steps, and dictate what terms he might think proper; the which, however rigorous they might be, there was

little doubt the latter, coerced by proof in hand, the dread of his misdeeds being published, as well as of the direct vengeance of the law, would at once see the necessity of submitting to. "Still," said he, "there are casualties to be provided against, such as Lord Leighton's death, which would render it only a prudent measure to put in form and deposit in neutral keeping the evidence we already possess, and what we may yet procure to meet any fresh manœuvre on the part of the crafty antagonist.

This I accordingly resolved on making my care and occupation for the winter.

The next morning, as I was wending my way to the Castle for the purpose of making enquiry as to the young heiress's convalescence, I was agreeably surprised by meeting her, apparently but little the worse—thanks to her Indian training—for her accident, taking the air on horseback, and while waiting the arrival of her grandfather, who, she told me had promised to attend her, looking

with gleeful interest on the ancient domain—all new and strange to her—she had been so providentially restored to.

I say I was pleased to find her so unexpectedly recovered from her accident; but there was a strong and bitter alloy in my pleasurable feelings, notwithstanding; I could not disguise from myself that the time had now arrived when the long and delightful intercourse we had hitherto held, and which by constant participation of interest, hardship, and danger, had grown almost into a habit of life, was at length, of necessity to terminate.

I had, in fact, under the feeling that impels one to cut short what threatens to occasion pain, made arrangements for proceeding northwards that very day, and as I walked by the side of her palfrey, I took occasion to state to her, that as our plans had now been happily accomplished, and she enjoyed the protection of her natural guardian, it was needful I should resign the pleasing office I had hitherto held of her squire and guard,

and content myself with offering my best wishes and prayers for her future happiness.

The communication produced an evidently damping effect upon her spirits, and turning her pony back, she accompanied me, silent and downcast to the mansion.

There she dismounted, and leaning on my arm, led me pensively along to the library. Seizing my hand as soon as we had entered, and looking on me with tender earnestness—

“Felipe,” she said, “me no let you part in dis way ; remember what I said in Ark-la, and do not make me grieve for having left it.”

“It afflicts me much, Kosata—I mean, dear Lady Laura—to leave you, but I do not see how I can well avoid the pain, my dwelling-place being so far from here.”

“Me no let you say dat, neither,” replied she, promptly sealing my lips with her little hand, “dis be your dwelling-place—you stay here and live with me—call me Kosata still ; see, Felipe,” she said going to the window,

and pointing coaxingly to the oak groves in the park, "see, big wood, Kosata put on moccasin again, make track there, you and me, kill deer, boil kettle, laugh at Blackfeet, have fine times; any Blackfeet hereby, Felipe?"

"Alas, no," I replied, between a smile and a sigh (I began almost to wish there had been), "we have only a shabby tribe to represent them, who go by the name of Blacklegs, scattered more or less over the land, who are, however, scarcely less dangerous. It is one of these who has already caused you so much suffering, and it is possible may yet work you further injury, unless—"

"Oh, then you stay and guard your sister still, live many happy days here with Kosata."

Our interesting *tête-à-tête* was here interrupted by the entrance of the Earl, who kindly and courteously enforced his sweet grandchild's proposal.

It would be useless to weary the reader by detailing the reasons which induced me to decline the friendly offer it would have

pleased me so greatly to accept. I was old enough to see its danger, old enough to feel that whilst the thought of any union was vain, from difference in age and station, my heart might be yet younger than my years, her own forestalled, and that absence was for the interest of both, and I stood firm, though it cost me no small effort in doing so.

I felt it, indeed, almost a relief when the noise of the postchaise drawing up at the front door warned us to conclude our interview.

The Earl went out, and pressing the maiden's hand to my lips in silence, for I was afraid to trust them with further speech, I followed him to the door, but was presently recalled by a low summons from the gentle girl, whom I found in tears, wreathing abstractedly into a sort of knot, a long tress of her glossy hair she had just severed.

"Felipe, dear brother," she murmured in broken accents, as she put it into my hands, "you go—you no forget me—me pray the Great Spirit for you; take this—it, my hair